”All yoga is yoga”
and other narratives.

Yoga as objectified and embodied knowledge.

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Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract

This work stems from the various debates of the definition, authenticity and plurality of yoga traditions both among yoga practitioners and scholars. The work has two aims: to move away from these debates by constructing a new theoretical perspective, and to study yoga as a lived, non-ascetic practice in India because based on ethnography, because such ethnographic study has not been done properly. The material of this work is based on official field work in the city of Bangalore, in Karnātaka state, India, from the end of October 2005 towards the end of February 2006.

This thesis then seeks to map the social reality of yoga as it existed in the mid 2000's among the of middle-aged, middle-class Hindu practitioners. In this work, it is analyzed how they narrate yoga. Overview of yoga history is presented as a frame that both provides an intertextual library and guides interpretation as an authoritative voice of "past in the present". Similarly, the traditional sources of authoritative knowledge in India, the Sanskritic textual canon and the institution of the guru are discussed.

The yoga narratives gathered in Bangalore essentially informs the re-theorizing of yoga, shifting focus from tradition to knowledge. Knowledge is taken as the main analytical category of the discussion. The dialogic relationship of theory and practice is at the core this work which then translates into exploring yoga knowledge as two interconnected categories: objectified knowledge, that is theory and philosophy of yoga, and embodied knowledge, meaning not only the practiced techniques of yoga but essentially all yoga knowledge that is performed. Yoga classes and narratives are observed as knowledge performances.

Lastly, practitioner narratives are analyzed by using the concepts of objectified and embodied knowledge, hierarchies of knowledge and participant roles in addition to exploring the narratives in their ethnographic context. As a result, the work concludes: each performance has the potential to integrate the theory and practice, and despite all the differences, all yoga is yoga.

Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords
Yoga, knowledge, tradition, history, anthropology

Yoga
India

Inscribed in 2016 (**11.COM**) on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

The philosophy behind the ancient Indian practice of yoga has influenced various aspects of how society in India functions, whether it be in relation to areas such as health and medicine or education and the arts. Based on unifying the mind with the body and soul to allow for greater mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing, the values of yoga form a major part of the community's ethos. Yoga consists of a series of poses, meditation, controlled breathing, word chanting and other techniques designed to help individuals build self-realization, ease any suffering they may be experiencing and allow for a state of liberation. It is practised by the young and old without discriminating against gender, class or religion and has also become popular in other parts of the world. Traditionally, yoga was transmitted using the Guru-Shishya model (master-pupil) with yoga gurus as the main custodians of associated knowledge and skills. Nowadays, yoga ashrams or hermitages provide enthusiasts with additional opportunities to learn about the traditional practice, as well as schools, universities, community centres and social media. Ancient manuscripts and scriptures are also used in the teaching and practice of yoga, and a vast range of modern literature on the subject available.

Primary

• **Mind** • **Physical education** • **Spiritual knowledge**

Secondary

• **Apprenticeship** • **Food customs** • **Health** • **Hygiene** • **Oral tradition** • **Philosophy** • **Religious practice** • **Respiratory systems** • **Sports activity** • **Traditional medicine**

Domains of the Convention

• **Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe** • **Oral traditions and expressions** • **Performing arts** • **Social practices, rituals and festive events**

https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/yoga-01163

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research questions

This work starts from the recognition that the growth and popularity of yoga world wide has resulted in a greater diversity in how, and to what depth, people understand yoga, which itself has a very long history that consists of a wide array of traditions and interpretations. Due to this multiplicity of understanding, this work grapples with the fact that, while speaking of yoga, we might use same words, but are sometimes talking about entirely different things. Nevertheless, such superficially similar terms can obscure important differences in understanding and practicing yoga. This problem of using a common vocabulary with different meanings becomes apparent, for example, when students hold conflicting expectations for yoga classes and in debates of what is actually meant by this term ’yoga’. Although, the meaning of yoga has never been fixed and there has always been a plurality of traditions with a large range of beliefs and practices, people still argue over the ”right” understanding of yoga[1]. The plurality can also be seen to invite these discussion. During my fieldwork among yoga practitioners in Bangalore, India, I often discussed yoga styles and their differences. I got almost always a fast response, namely, that ”all yoga is yoga!”

This thesis thus moves away from the definitional question, “what is yoga,” and it instead explores the practice of yoga in contemporary, urban India from an ethnographic perspective. Following Michael Lambek (1993) I shift my theoretical focus from tradition to knowledge. By “knowledge,” I refer both to the theory and practice of yoga, as without knowledge one cannot perform yoga as it is the knowledge of yoga techniques and ideas that are put in action. I, therefore, observe knowledge as an analytical category, which can be divided into interconnected categories of objectified and embodied knowledge. In contrast to most Indological or philological yoga studies, by “practice”, I refer to the embodied knowledge that practitioners perform. The textual descriptions of such practice fall into the category of objectified knowledge. As repositories and registers of knowledge they inform one another. The thesis therefore asks the following research questions: how is knowledge of yoga

[1] During the writing process in the midst of the pandemic, the transnational yoga communities have faced the infiltration of “Qanon” rhetorics into the “*yogic* discourse" among certain circles. As a result, the debate of the correct understanding vesrus too innovative interpretation has again flared. Thus, every time I have felt the urge to rearrange my introduction I remember that these debates still do exist.

acquired and narrated in different contexts, and how is the authority of yoga knowledge constituted. People orient themselves differently towards acquiring and performing their knowledge, which produces a hierarchy of knowledge and different degrees of competence to perform.

It was the views of regular yoga students in India that I wanted to study. From the beginning, at the heart of this project has been the attempt to describe a piece of yoga's contemporary social reality, including the interplay of practice and theory within it. In this work, I therefore analyze the narratives that Indian students and teachers produced on yoga in Bangalore in order to understand yoga as a philosophically informed, but crucially, *lived* practice.

In doing so, my work seeks to fill a gap. Although yoga scholarship is growing—also in the social sciences—I claim that contemporary yoga in India has been understudied both ethnographically and from anthropological perspectives. There are not many ethnographic studies on the renunciant yogis, and even less, if any, give voice to the regular Indian yoga students in India. My fieldwork site was Bangalore, the modern ICT-hub of India, and my informants were mostly middle aged, middle class, Hindus practicing yoga as part of their everyday lives. I chose this site to observe more clearly what is contemporary yoga in India and how it is understood by both expert and non-expert practitioners who are Indians. In this cosmopolitan city I was able to compare and detect differences to similar Western settings in order to better construct an "Indian view". This is thus a study of yoga narratives and yoga knowledge in Bangalore, India, as it was presented in 2005-2006. By no means I am attempting to provide an exhaustive and all-encompassing presentation on yoga, rather, the aim of this work is to offer a new perspective, hopefully a fresh angle to the topic that could inspire future studies on any of the proposed themes.

This is a study of yoga narratives without being a narrative analysis per se. I am not analyzing ready-made traditional narratives or stories, nor using narrative analysis as a method, rather, I look into how experiences and knowledge of yoga were narrated by yoga practitioners in Bangalore, or, quite importantly, how they were not narrated. Instead of being handed 'a' or 'the narrative', it is my attempt to construct my informants' narratives from the recurrent themes that appeared in naturally occurring discourse as well as in interviews that I conducted in the field. Of course there are few exceptions. For example, I view the history of yoga itself as a narrative and I trace differences in the accounts given by the informants and those offered by scholars. As

yoga has a very long history, throughout my fieldwork I was interested in the continuities and discontinuities of tradition, a central theme in yoga scholarship, and this seemed to be of interest to my informants as well. The question is then how yoga knowledge is and has been transmitted, reproduced and represented from generation to another, and it provides a mirror to reflect on the present. However, I will not provide a full historical overview of yoga. Rather, I observe/ refer to history as a grand narrative, or a communicative strategy of referring to the authoritative past in the present.

Within yoga, questions about the authority of knowledge, including the evaluation and legitimation of knowledge, are often of great importance. In India, for example, the textual canon of works pertaining to yoga are typically regarded as the uttermost authority within many traditions. Yet, as yoga falls into categories of both shared, public culture and also specialized knowledge, one's practical competence and participatory roles are also essential. This work therefore explores the different aspects of yoga knowledge and which kind of positions people assume in relation to it, understanding that yoga knowledge can be displayed in performance and in narratives. I argue, the grand narrative of yoga history as tradition often serves as an interpretive frame for the contemporary social reality of yoga in India. At the same time, I recognize that yoga has survived due to its great ability to adapt. Thus, although teachers might disagree on many matters regarding yoga practice, simultaneously they might accept that "all yoga is yoga," acknowledging that students must start from somewhere in order for a more profound interest to be ignited.

In pursing these lines of argument, I hope to make a contribution to research on yoga. While a lot of interesting research on yoga already exists, I have not been able to find studies that seriously attempt to look both at the planes of lived experiences and the theoretical framework of yoga among the non-ascetic practitioners in India. Interestingly, in the traditional framework of the student–teacher relationship, written yoga theory does not play a big part in the instruction process. Why then is yoga theory so important within modern instructional contexts and what role does it play in actual practice? Similarly, existing yoga research focuses on Western yoga practices and practitioners, rather than on contemporary yoga contexts and practitioners in India. My aim is thus to contribute an anthropological perspective to contemporary yoga studies and especially to the study of yoga in India.

This work focuses on actual yoga practice rather than on academic descriptions of

discrete traditions.. It is the social reality that this study attempts to describe in a given setting in urban India, Bangalore, among regular students of yoga, in a given glimpse of a time. Questions regarding authority, expert knowledge and participant roles are my central ones: for example, how do practitioners align themselves to various figurations of yoga tradition? How do they understand yoga knowledge in relation to the contemporary yoga scene? How do they debate the authenticity of yoga knowledge claims?

1.1.1 The problem of defining yoga

With the growing popularization of yoga, pre-existing yoga practices and yoga texts have been subjected to numerous reinterpretations by scholars and practitioners alike. It has also posed a debets of authenticity of contemporary practices. The discussion have moved forward partly, but as the material of this work is of recent history I feel compelled to return to the debates of that time. Especially the emergence of the practice of *āsana,* yoga posture, as the most prominent technique of contemporary yogas. Yoga has become at large to be understood as an *āsana* practice. According to scholarship it is, however, quite a new phenomena. Scholars have also questioned the linking of the contemporary teaching of *āsana* practice with an accompanying narrative of 2000 or even 4000 years of tradition, which seems to be often used to validate the new forms and traditions of *āsana* practice. No evidence of such *āsana* practice as we know it, was found. (Bühneman 2011; Singleton 2010).

Simultaneously, scholars have also observed that the yoga texts, which are now regarded as authoritative have been raised to their esteemed position in the process of redefinition of 'modern yoga'. Yoga scholars have sometimes referred to this process as yoga renaissance. In this process, since the end of 19th century yoga was transformed: conscious efforts were made to reform yoga as suitably spiritual and scientific, as opposed to its earlier forms of esoteric and devotionalist traditions. New ideas and practices were included in yoga, that was inspired by the interaction of Indian and Western intelligentsia. Yoga was made attractive and presentable to the modern audiences both in India and outside India. and also reformed as a national pride for the Indian nation in the making. In short, yoga becomes India's spiritual gift to the world: (see on yoga Alter 2004; Bühneman 2011; de Michelis 2004; Singleton 2008, 2010; Sjoman 1999; Strauss 2002, 2005; on religious and spiritual nationalism Van der Veer 1994, 2014). However, the recent scholarship shows there is in fact recently discovered textual evidence of a more advanced *āsana* practice since the 16th century, and its

presumed character as innovation was a result of lacking the evidence (Birch 2018).

Nevertheless, White (2012, 2) notes ” This is not the first time that people have "reinvented" yoga in their own image. … [T]his is a process that has been ongoing for at least two thousand years. Every group in every age has created its own version and vision of yoga.“ He relates both the definitional problems and the malleability of yoga to semantics.

> **When seeking to define a tradition, it is useful to begin by defining one's terms. It is here that problems arise. "Yoga" has a wider range of meanings than nearly any other word in the entire Sanskrit lexicon.** The act of yoking an animal, as well as the yoke itself, is called yoga. In astronomy, a conjunction of planets or stars, as well as a constellation, is called yoga. When one mixes together various substances, that, too, can be called yoga. The word yoga has also been employed to denote a device, a recipe, a method, a strategy, a charm, an incantation, fraud, a trick, an endeavor, a combination, union, an arrangement, zeal, care, diligence, industriousness, discipline, use, application, contact, a sum total, and the Work of alchemists. But this is by no means an exhaustive list. (White 2012, 2; abbreviation and bolding mine).

Since the renewed propagation of yoga both in India and outside of India towards the end of 1800s, there has been two opposite forces operating. On the one hand, the narrative of yoga tradition and lineage became increasingly popular. On the other hand, there were efforts to strip yoga of now “unwanted” Hindu or Indian elements. Interestingly, narratives on the long history of yoga and its textual tradition were used to legitimate more modern, and later transnational practices, of yoga. But, these narratives were also to criticize them.

Nevertheless, as yoga styles that were regarded to follow tradition produced offshoots that separated from the narrative of tradition, the yoga community got interested in the question of authenticity, discussion revolving around traditional, classical yoga as opposite to modern, global yoga. These questions and perspectives were and are to some extent still present also in the academic studies. For example a collection *Yoga in the Modern World: Contemporary Perspectives* published in 2008 brought the leading scholars of modern yoga together, and almost each author comments on authenticity, some more profoundly (see Singleton 2008), than others. Unfortunately I will not be able to present the large body of yoga scholarship, but it seems that scholars still take a stand by, for example, stating that they are not aiming at presenting authentic view on yoga, like I am too. This long prelude is my way of escaping the question, while nevertheless introducing the lively discussions that surrounded my fieldwork.

The debate included also the question whether yoga regarded as physical yoga was ”real yoga” or a fitness regime. My fieldwork was within two yoga styles that could be defined as physical yoga, but I was not sure if this would be adequate as a description and I wanted to find out whether it was just physical for the practitioners. To give some academic background on this question, the historian of religious studies Knut A. Jacobsen (2005, 4) writes on the classical meanings of yoga and clarifies that yoga traditions "involve distinct interpretations of the purpose and goal of human life and techniques for fulfilling that purpose". He of course sees the diversity in the tradition to start with.

> Yoga has been understood, incorporated and practiced in multiple ways in South Asian environment. It has been fashioned by different persons and groups and has been adopted by schools of thought with strikingly divergent philosophical and religious views. New religious formations that arose in India, such as the Tantric traditions, gave new interpretations of the yoga techniques, added new methods of meditation, and offered new theories of the body, understandings of the goals of yoga and interpretations of the *samādhi* [enlightenment] experience. Yoga is part of all the major religions that originated in South Asia including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, and it has been adopted by individuals in Islam and Christianity.” (Jacobsen 2005, 3; [my added clarification])

However, he is critical of the global yoga phenomenon and labels yogas developed by, for example, Krishnamāchārya, and his students Jois (*aṣṭāṅga vinyāsa yoga)*, Iyengar (Iyengar yoga), Desikachar (*viniyoga*), Sivananda (Sivananda Yoga Vedanta centers) and the Swami Satyananda (Bihar School of Yoga)—all of which are enormously influential modern yoga styles in and outside of India—as ”physical exercise yoga” (Jacobsen 2005, 25). Interestingly, the practitioner narratives include both reasonings of physical practice and critiques of yoga taken as fitness. It poses a question on which grounds are these seemingly contradicting arguments made.

Jacobsen is especially critical of Western interpretations of yoga, but he seems to turn a blind eye to the contemporary interpretations of yoga that are articulated among so-called regular people in India who also practice yoga outside of a world-renouncing context. Thus, when Jacobsen writes, ”The ultimate purpose for the traditional practitioner of yoga is to detach themselves form the outer world to realize an inner reality. Following *Sāṃkhya-Yoga* detachment logically leads to social isolation” (Jacobsen 2005, 23), the problem seems to be that the ultimate goal of yoga today is not the same goal of yoga when it was introduced about 2000 years ago. ”While yoga as a system of physical exercises leading to physical and mental well-being has had the broadest appeal in the West, performing yoga in accordance with the *Sāṃkhya-Yoga* system means engaging in a disciplined practice seeking perfection in meditation.” ”Yoga in the global context is often given a restricted meaning.” (Ibid, 26). Although

this is very true, my argument is that it is not as black and white as one might think, because it has not even been studied in India in different contexts, for example among the middle class. To Jacobsen, it seems, the classical goal of self-realization is the only true yoga, and if *āsanas* are practiced, then rather than yoga, it is basically physical exercise.

Interestingly, I encountered these discussions also in Bangalore. My informants often reflected on ”what was going on” in the realm of contemporary yoga scene in and outside of India. As a white yoga student from Europe, I was a living example to many of my informants of what was going on in the West, how yoga is getting narrowed down as it is decontextualised and recontextualized, resulting in reductionist understanding and interpretation, or ”diluted” as some would say, and it had become a commodity. I sensed I had to prove that my intentions were pure: I wanted to learn and study yoga instead of exploiting it. Naturally the change was, and is happening also in India, and that too was addressed. At the same time, if I questioned the different yoga styles, the answer almost without exception was always the same ”all yoga is yoga!” It was this paradox that both troubled and intrigued me, all these years later ((until I myself was eventually so socialized into the philosophy that I settled with the same conclusion)). Part of my goal, then, is to understand my informants reconciled their debates over “authentic” yoga with the conviction that “all yoga is yoga.”

Thus, when I returned to this project, a phrase from the Russian formalist school that I heard in a comparative literature course was ringing in my ears: ”all communication is based on misunderstanding” referering to the impossibility of fully understanding one another. For example, if earlier the debate on physical yoga versus meditation was about authenticity, nowadays, youngsters are heard saying they are ”over yoga” referring mainly to the practice of yoga postures, and now to ”do meditation” is the new ”it”, irony being that meditation is often times regarded as the highest form of yoga, both in yoga theory and in the physical practice versus meditation discussions. Of course there are mediation traditions outside of yoga too. My perspective then is that often times we are using the same words, but talking about entirely different things and this is the source of many misunderstandings in the contemporary yoga world and between the different, and also separate yoga communities.

Coupled with the grotesque commercialization, the use of word ”yoga” is beyond any control, and it has become a selling point, as a result the question of

authenticity has become a question of cultural appropriation, which is discussed already, but I hope will become a more serious discussion among Western practitioners and yoga scholars alike. Of course, what yoga really is has not ceased to be under constant negotiation and re-valuations among the more serious practitioners. But in the context in which they, we, operate, the discussion is getting ever more complex. Even if my data presents already a piece of history, dating 15 years back, I am convinced it is still relevant and worthwhile to present today. It may even provide some insight on how to navigate the current discussions. In order to understand how the arguments of this thesis developed we have to rewind the past 15 years back, to the debates whether physical yoga is real yoga amongst other things. The imagined oppositions between the physical yoga and the meditative yoga, classical and modern or even post-modern yoga, have not entirely faded either, and are some of the ground themes at the background of this work.

Throughout the long history of diverse yoga traditions, yoga has had different forms in different contexts, and some forms of it like the left hand tantra with its impure rituals and yogis as street performers have been been contested as inappropriate, but, inevitably the explosion of interest towards yoga around the turn of the millenium created a self-feeding circle of creating new representations and interpretations of yoga reaching and attracting ever more wider audiences. Hand in hand with the exponential growth of yoga both in popularity and availability, another kinds of negotiations emerged with the fast transformations and the question of, or should I say quest for tradition. I will return to these thematics when I discuss about the history, or the grand narratives, of yoga but for now I'd like to conclude that as yoga and its transformation became so apparent and visible, part of the urban everyday street view and mass media (and later social media), yoga and especially it transforming became a topic of discussion.

1.1.2 The problem of learning yoga "properly"

Indeed, when I journeyed to India in 2004 to begin my field research I continually found myself placed within debates about "proper" yoga practice, study and instruction. Before traveling to Bangalore, I stayed in Goa for almost two weeks with a traditional *āyurvedic* healer and his apprentice, as it seemed like a good chance for learning about yoga. The healer told me early on that in Europe everyone takes knowledge as their basic right, but in India it is not the same, knowledge does not belong to everyone. Not only did he remind me that yoga used to be a secretive subject, learned only with a *guru*, a teacher who had accepted you as a student, but he had

already earlier informed me, that in India it is more important to be accepted by people than what you want. Clearly, I had overstepped some boundaries of hierarchical structures by my many questions and eager intention to learn about various aspects of yoga. Although I found this first comment only much later in my notes, the latter argument affected strongly my settling in Bangalore for the field work proper: I had to prove that I was worthy of my questions.

Finally in Bangalore, after having built rapport over the months, traveling to the classes by the local buses each day (and quite long distance in the first month, have to say), by sweating side by side on the yoga mats week after week, my more familiar informants seemed to be genuinely interested that I would really learn to know and understand yoga fundamentally better than I did in order to do justice to the subject in my presentation. My ignorance and lack of competence was quite too obvious, even if I was trying my very best to learn as much yoga philosophy, which is seen as the theoretical base of yoga practice, as I possibly could.

The healer too had thought that one should learn yoga properly, ideally in an ashram, and I was mistaken to go to a modern city for it. Although he himself was selling his services to tourists in Goa, he had very traditional understanding of learning and practicing yoga, and he was critical of the commercialization of the tradition both in the sense of selling your knowledge and buying just pieces of information. He was of the strong opinion that you really have to commit to lifelong studies of holistic traditions like yoga or *āyurveda*, the Indian traditional medical system, that have been developed over thousands of years, instead of picking and choosing according to your preference. He warned that unless you don't follow the whole system of yoga in its entirety, meaning diet, cleansing techniques, breathing techniques, meditation, moral teachings of *yama* and *niyama,* practicing just *āsanas* as fitness exercise can harm you. Later I learned that Bangalorean yoga practitioners and teachers also acknowledged the lack of commitment, however, their views were more fitted to contemporary contexts. Repeatedly, however, by all with whom I had a chance to converse it was emphasized that practicing *āsanas* does not make one a yogi: one should study the theory of yoga, the scriptures and books by established contemporary *gurus*.

One of my closest informants, a friendly man, asked me how could I ever learn anything about yoga as I was so ill prepared and did not even know anything for example about the mythology of yoga, which he regarded as highly important part of yoga knowledge. My fellow practitioners were also shocked to realize that I did not

know the names of the *āsanas*, as they explained the names describe the meaning of the poses in essence, and my inability to learn the Sanskrit mantras was an embarrassment to all. Interestingly, when I told about this mythology remark to another informant, who had been a scholar of yoga, he contested that idea as ridiculous. His own, expert view both in the tradition and science was more both analytical and liberal and he saw the value of learning and practicing for different purposes, as did yoga teachers too even if they were critical about the lack of real interest, and he was able to distinguish different layers of yoga as valid approaches containing different kinds of spheres of knowledge. In short, I came to learn fast that knowing *āsanas*, the most prominent contemporary symbol of yoga, was not enough *to know yoga*. To know of yoga is common, whereas knowledge of yoga is specialized and it stems from a certain, yet, enormous context of knowledge base.

Yoga is said to originate from Hinduism and it does also have a refined position in classical Hinduism. As a tradition, or as a system of knowledge, yoga is not restricted to Hinduism, and there has been yoga traditions for example in Buddhism and Jainism since ancient times. In a very traditional way of describing yoga, 'classical yoga', as sometimes is explicated, is one of the six orthodox *darśanas*, philosophies or disciplines of Hinduism, that accept the *Vedas*, the oldest layer of scriptures of early Hinduism written in Sanskrit, as the authority. Sanskrit is regarded as the holy language, and the *Vedas,* the truth, as the holy revelation. Learning of these text was restricted only to the male belonging to the three upper class, *varna*, and were twice-born: first physically and after a rite of sacred thread also spiritually. The retired scholar told me that there is even a saying that the *Vedas* or scriptures went to the brahmin priest and pleaded "protect me". Yoga has a recognized status as a discipline, a classical *darśana,* in that intertextual context. Patañjali's *yogasāstra*, which has become to be seen as the emblem of classical yoga, and also one of the main texts of yoga in contemporary era. There are also schools of thought that do not accept the *Vedas* as the authority and also yogas that derive from these traditions.The plurality of yoga traditions has been and is much under discussion among scholars.

It is then, not any surprise that what I encountered in innumerable occasions was that the scriptures of yoga, for example *Yogasūtras* of Patañjali, *Bhagavad Gīta* and *Hathayoga Pradīpikā* to mention a few, were held as the uppermost authority, alongside *gurus*, by most informants and presentations of yoga. However, it was also emphasized by practitioners that yoga is a practical subject, not a purely intellectual one. The

benefits or the goal of yoga, be it purely physical or the higher spiritual goal of enlightenment, cannot be attained by reading the scriptures. Putting it together it would mean that to know yoga, yoga needs to be both practiced and the theory studied. Still, in the social reality of yoga, that was my main interest over the philosophical ideals, teachers confessed lacking truly devoted practitioners, who could commit themselves even time-wise for devoted practice let alone to study yoga philosophy.

Interestingly, I met also many people who were familiar with some of the yoga scriptures but did not practice or their practice seemed to be quite minimal, and they were the ones more keen to share their knowledge about yoga, whereas the actual practitioners were more shy on sharing their views, unless they were teachers or they acted as my proper informants. One established teacher for example refused to give me an interview by stating that he does not know Sanskrit or the scriptures, meaning that he was not familiar enough with what I would call as ”the official narrative” of yoga tradition, or lacked communicative competence thereof. When I was asking the yoga students questions they often told me to ask their teachers, and the teachers told me to read the books. I also had discussions or interviews in which informants were practically repeating a ”textbook narrative” that I could have read from anywhere. Yet, the whole concept of ’yoga’ is basically as vast a concept like ’Hinduism’, and there is not one narrative but many, and still a ”textbook” or ”official” narrative can be detected, at least in certain contexts. Naturally, teachers and practitioners themselves were discussing sometimes the differences, and revealed critical views too, but when I made enquiries about the topic I repeatedly got ”all yoga is yoga" as an answer.

I was quite intrigued, yet, puzzled by this all, which seemed like a paradoxical relationship of authorative ideal of yoga tradition onto practice and social reality. It was these conflicting ideologies and realities in my field data that somehow resonated with linguistic anthropology on textuality, performance, genres and so forth, which I will be discussing in the chapter on knowledge . In the end, however, Lambek’s (1993; of which on overview 1997) analysis of knowledge in Mayotte, knowledge of three distinctive traditions or disciplines, proved to be quite influential for developing of this work. His point of view of social organization, or what he called political economy of knowledge as disciplines, rather than traditions, provides an analytical step forward, away from questions of authenticity that easily seems to stem from my description, in the more interesting questions that I started the work with of contextual ways of acquiring, legitimating and circulating of knowledge to which my field data also points

to. As we can detect, there are good grounds to explore yoga in terms of objectified and embodied knowledge, which Lambek discuss as distinctive but interrelated categories. It is exactly their dialectics that somehow is the backbone around which the flesh of this work is built on, even if it seem sometimes hidden behind the layers of other tissues.

In what follows, then, I seek to map the social reality of yoga as it existed among middle-aged, middle-class yoga practitioners in Bangalore in the mid-2000s. In doing so, I use the heartly debates that existed on proper yoga practices as entry points to the narratives on yoga practice and yoga tradition that circulated at that time. It is from this corpus of data then, that I examine the ways in which practitioners framed particular practices and knowledge as authoritative. Yet, it is alos in the milieu that I return to the understand that debates on yoga themselves served to unify the yoga field, that is, the repeated conviction that "all yoga is yoga." Along the way, I theorize yoga practice as a dialectic between embodied knowledge and objectified knowledge. From this perspective, the debates over "authenticity" can be seen as a question about how some form of embodied knowledge relates to the objectified knowledge contained in the yoga canons. But, reciprocally, this perspectives also allows us to appreciate how the dynamism of yoga, its constant evolution, remains tethered to a common discussion of classical texts.

The structure of the thesis is as follows: First, I introduce my fieldsite in Bangalore, India. I then turn to review scholarship on yoga, paying specific attention to how the concept of "tradition" has been used to frame yoga history. I then present my theoretical framework, which combines Lambek's approach to knowledge with linguistic anthropological theories of intertextuality and performance. The analytic chapters follow. As a whole, then, the thesis constitutes an effort to bring an ethnographic eye to contemporary yoga practice in India as well as to the debates that animated it.

2 METHODS

2.1 Fieldwork

I conducted my official field work in the city of Bangalore[2], in Karnātaka state, India, from end of October 2005 towards the end of February 2006. But in some sense, in fact, I never left the field as yoga research transformed into yoga life. Inevitably, my own process of becoming a dedicated yoga student, practitioner and teacher, very active in my community, informs me in carrying out this thesis. The insider role gives me a different perspective to read and interpret the data, also the research literature, and definitely my own knowledge base on the subject has grown exponentially during the 15 years. Yet, a clear distinction must be made. On one hand, It would be unethical to use the information I have gathered in any of the other roles than the one doing thesis research. Small, carefully thought exceptions might take place. On the other hand, the subject is as vast as possible to start with, and demarcation is needed. Therefore, for the purpose of this work, I am defining the field as the original one, from where it all, this thesis and my personal initiation to yoga, as a process really started.

2.1.1 Bangalore – a conflicting field site for a yoga study

Looking at yoga as a tradition originating from India, it is often portrayed in connection to Indian spirituality, or religiosity, and often depicted by wandering renunciates, *sādhu*, in their robes, or people in white clothing doing some classical yoga poses like the lotus pose somewhere in the nature. Although these images are stereotypes, they do reflect some part of, but not the whole picture of yoga in India. Outside of India the popular imagery of yoga has a lot to do with health, fitness, wellness, sex appeal, and beauty yet it is often also described as something ”more than just exercise” (see Puustinen, Rautaniemi and Halonen, 2013). This contrasts with the depiction of yoga in Indian newspapers where the communal aspect of yoga is more prominent. For example, newspaper pictures might include scenes of mass yoga events for regular lay people (Alter 2008), including children. Yet, I argue that when one says

[2] While I was in the field, the Karnataka state government proposed and decided that the anglicized name ’Bangalore’ should be changed back to its original form ’Bengaluru’. The state government decided to officially implement this name change from November 1, 2006 (www.indiatoday.in 13.4.2016, read 24.11.2019), but it took eight years to take place in November 1, 2014 (www.bbc.com 31.10.2014, read 24.11.2019; https://economictimes.indiatimes.com 1.11.2014, read 24.11.2019) As my work refers to a period before the name change, I have decided to use to the name Bangalore, which was the official name then. (I have also been to India six times after my field work and have observed that both names are still used..)

yoga, the image that comes to one's mind is not middle-aged, middle class, regular Indian lay people, in normal clothes of traditional costumes or just regular sweatpants and a t-shirt. It was these people I wanted to reach with this study, those people who practice yoga in India but are rarely seen as representative of yoga practice by outsiders.

Arguably, however, it was a bit curious choice to do fieldwork on yoga in a modern cosmopolitan city. Bangalore is often called the "silicon valley of India" (see also the above links), and in fact, I've heard many times and in various occasions, in and outside India, a claim that is "it's not even real India". A more obvious choice for a study of yoga practice in India would have been an ashram, a big yoga institute , a holy place or spiritual center. Before settling in Bangalore I did visit a few places like Varanasi to see the river Ganges, to taste the atmosphere of the sacred *Ganga* I had seen in ethnographic documentaries, only to face the brutality of an overly touristed and polluted city. In Goa I ended up staying for almost two weeks with a so called traditional *ayurvedic* doctor and his apprentice with a fellow student of anthropology. They had a more "traditional" and "authentic" kind of view about yoga and they were strongly of the opinion that the teachers in a modern city like Bangalore are "not good" and the yoga there is commercial, to be sold, unlike knowledge or tradition should. They also heavily questioned my plan to go to there to study yoga and tried to persuade me to stay for example with them to study (for money, I am sure,) or to go to any of the many ashrams. Of course a more confined context would have been much easier for any research, but I kept to my plan.

In those days most of the students of our anthropology department still chose so-called "classical" field sites, small villages or towns in far away places, to study remote peoples and traditions. Our training had quite a traditional emphasis, giving a solid base in the classical anthropology. On the one hand I had a fantasy of a classical study to meet the expectations of a good anthropologist, on the other, I wanted to do something different. In retrospect, I was rebelling against my training. Naturally, I was inspired by post-colonialistic studies, Indian scholars criticizing also the academic construct of India (e.g. Narayanan 2000), and the larger redefinition of "field" and fieldwork (e.g. Marcus 1995), although I must admit that I was not fully aware how fundamental the paradigmatic debate and renegotiation of anthropology as a discipline truly was. I was just influenced by it. Of course, colleagues and teachers told me that doing fieldwork in a big city will be difficult. Of course, they were right and maybe I would had succeeded better if I had chosen an ashram or a single yoga school. But, I wanted to work

comparatively, and chose to gather data on two yoga styles from three different teachers, whom I met on weekly basis.

My rationale to go to a modern city was quite simple: in choosing a location that was the closest to the Western yoga context that I was familiar with, e.g., amongst well educated, middle class and urban people, I would be able to see more clearly what was different between ”Indian yoga” and ”Western yoga”. Here I must quickly state, that I am using the categories ”Indian”, ”Western”, ”classical”, ”modern” and ”tradition” as my interlocutors used them, not as essentialistic ideas. I will not address questions of constructing the ”other” or orientalistic representations. Although my plan was not to compare the Indian and Western yogas, I thought that I might be able to detect some of the meaningful differences that would reveal or point to something essential about yoga in India and the ”regular” Indian lay people practicing yoga, and it did. By regular people or lay people I refer to householders in opposition to the renunciants who have dedicated themselves to religious or spiritual path. Both being a householder or a renunciant are recognized life stages and institutionalized roles in Indian society. My goas was to counter common stereotypes about yoga in India and instead to learn about the social reality of yoga practice in a mundane, non-exotic context that would be relatable also to a Western student of yoga[3].

Initially I was thinking about Mysore, a hub for ashtanga yoga, but as one department researcher, Siru Aura, had done fieldwork in Bangalore and could connect me with a few people, I listened to her advice and decided to go there instead. Fortunately, as a big city, I knew that Bangalore would offer many options for yoga study. Furthermore, there was also a Yoga University[4] near Bangalore, which Strauss (2002, 244) had mentioned as institution that promoted research and the practice of yoga. The university alone drew my eye to Bangalore.

2.1.2 Fieldwork in Bangalore

> ”In conformity with the general practice, this district too is named after its headquarter town, namely Bangalore, which incidentally happens to be the premier city of the State and its headquarters as well. The name 'Bangalore' is the anglicised form of Bengaluru, which, according to popular belief, is derived from Bangalu - itself a corrupt form of the word Benda Kalu (cooked beans) and Ooru, meaning a town. Tradition associates the Hoysala king Vira Ballala with the origin of this name and recounts how he got separated from his attendants during one of his hunting expeditions in this region, lost his way and after hours of wandering, reached the hut of an old woman at night and sought for the much needed food and shelter. This humble woman, it is

[3] Actually, I did at first even have a discussion with the professor of indology, Asko Parpola, about the wandering ascetics, *sādhus*, but it was he who noticed that in fact his very many good recommendations did not seem to spark up my interest.

[4] The institution has later achieved also the status of ‘Yoga University’, but in 2005 it was still a deemed to be University and is later referred to as a deemed University.

> said, offered cooked beans, which the king gladly ate, and made up a bed for him also. This episode, in a way, brought glory to the place and, the settlement began to develop further in view of the royal patronage. However, the founding of modern Bangalore is attributed to Kempe Gauda, a section of the Yelahanka line of chiefs, who finally established himself at Magadi. He founded the town of Bangalore in 1537 A.D. and he got elected four watchtowers at the four cardinal points predicting that in course of time the town would extend up to those points." (Census of India 2011, Karnataka, 8)

Bangalore, or officially since 2014 again Bengaluru, is the capital of Karnātaka state located in Southern India. The city is located in the southeastern part of the state, close to the borders of the neighboring states of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The city lies about 920 metres above sea level, having quite pleasant weather all year round: the heat rarely goes above 36° in the summer or below 14° in winter. Having railroad lines radiating to all directions, Bangalore is a meeting point or a hub of South-India, and people have migrated there also from all over India. Kannada is the official language of Karnātaka, and according to census 2011 is spoken by 46 % of Bangaloreans, whereas both Tamil (language of Tamil people; predominant in Tamil Nadu) and Telugu (Telugu people; predominant in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and others) are spoken by almost 14 % of inhabitants, and more North-Indian languages Urdu by 12 % and Hindi by 5.4 %.[5] Since English is one of the official languages, and still widely used, I was able to carry out my field work in English, and only in few occasions I regreted not having an interpreter.

Bangalore is characterized by its multi-ethnic and -religious population and sense of general open-mindedness. Going around the first months, I was often stopped to be asked of "my good name", "which country [I come from]", "[do I go to] temple or church", and "[whether I was] married or single" and "[if I had] brothers or sisters". The locals seemed to be almost proud of attracting people from "all over" to their city, but also acknowledging the problems that it caused in regard to traffic and housing. My informants were all Hindus, and mainly brahmins.

Bangalore was, and is, fast growing. In fact, between years of 1991 and 2001 Bangalore was the second fastest growing metropolis in India after New Delhi, with a growth rate of 35.1 %. In 2001 Census the Bangalore district, on 2,196 square kilometer area, had a population of 6.5 millions, in 2011 it was already 9.6 millions, with an increase of 47.2 %. (https://www.census2011.co.in/, 9.6.2020). Half of this population

[5] There are also 0,5-2,8 % speakers of Malayalam (Kerala), Marathi (Maharahasthra), Konkani (Goa), Bengali (Bengali), Odia (Odisha), Tulu (Tulus ethnic group), Gujarati (Gujarat) and other languages spoken by 1.33%. According to the same 2011 census 80.29 % were Hindu, 12.97 % Muslims (about same as national average), 5.25 % Christians and under 1 % Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, others and not stated.

is male and half female, with quite high literacy of 82.96 % 2001 and 88.69 % 2011.[6] I was told by the locals that initially the city was just a small town and its infrastructure could not handle the rapid growth of the population. The many one-way streets got jammed easily and my daily bus trips to the yoga schools would take usually only 5-10 minutes in the morning before 7 am, but easily 1-2 hours on the way back after 9 am. Many locals had fled the inner city to the smaller districts, *taluk*s, which Daniel (1987, 69) has translated as ”counties”, but then also long distances were a problem. Some were already moving back to the city or at least considering it, tired of spending their days in the traffic, I was told.

Regardless, Bangalore is considered as a very progressive city, marked by its many education and research institutions and known especially as the information and communications technology center both nationally and globally. As ”the Silicon Valley of India”, Bangalore houses the IT industrial park called Electronic City on the outskirts of the city in Anekal taluk, and International Tech Park in Whitefield, and many multinational corporations have headquarters there. The words used by many people I met outside of Bangalore, and even in the city, to describe it were often ”University city”, ”modern”, ”cosmopolitan” and even”civilized”. It was not once or twice that I was told to go to Calcutta or somewhere up north like Bihar ”to see real India”. But it was not the ITC parks or the modern city center, and definitely not the nightlife for which the city nowadays is also famous for, nor the many places of interests that would attract the tourists, where I spent my time. Although the city has many historical places and is also know as the ’garden city’ with many parks and lakes, I hardly visited them. I was more attracted to the yoga halls. I was mostly sticking to my more ’traditional’ local informants, in certain ’blocks’, neighborhoods, of the city, and my conversations were revolving more around the subject of yoga or everyday life.

The first three weeks I stayed in a large ladies’ hostel run by a friend of Siru Aura from our anthropological department, but for many reasons I decided to move out from there closer to the area where my preferred yoga schools were. Due to the traffic, distances and the 70 other girls in same facilities I was spending too much time in the traffic jam and queueing for bathroom and food. I found a roof top room on top of security business, just for myself, which was small and without kitchen or any other facilities, but it had a private squat toilet and a bucket shower, so I was content. I stayed

[6] These numbers cover both the Bangalore Urban and Bangalore Rural districts with ratios of 90.9 % and 9.1 %. The city itself is smaller, and in 2001 the population was 4.3 millions and in 2011 8.4 millions. (https://censusindia.gov.in/, 9.6.2020)

there for the rest of my time, for about three months. Although I was the only person living in the building, only some of the employees of the company occasionally slept next door, I felt quite safe as during office hours I was surrounded by security personnel, and there was a guard downstairs. Every now and then I would go downstairs and have *chai,* the delicious Indian tea, with my host, and if I did not come home from my yoga events early enough, by nine, he would hear about it from his staff and scold me the next day. So I settled in one corner of the city and travelled daily to certain yoga schools within reasonable travel time. The area where I stayed was quite nice, but as is typical in India, adjacent to it was a more rough area, through which I walked home from my bus stop, at nights I was happy not to understand their words in my direction. On the other side were the Muslim blocks and I woke up to their beautiful morning prayers every day 5am.

The feel of the ITC hub was of course somehow present in the city and it seemed that almost all of the people who introduced themselves in different, various occasions were engineers. I met people living in scarcity, and I met some truly cosmopolitan people who flew to Dubai for better shopping. I also learned that in the progressive city couples could walk together in a park, even holding hands, unlike in rural areas at that time where it would be regarded as highly inappropriate, I even witnessed a young couple kissing secretly in a cafe. I could detect different layers of life taking place between the local worldview and taking part in the ’modern’, global world, which clearly was both desirable and fashionable, and in between generations. I met dedicated yoga practitioners who had taken the vow of celibacy, *brahmacharya*, and yogi parents who let their youngsters go out with their friends in the city for parties late at night.

One striking example of the worlds not colliding but co-existing simultaneously was one of my informants telling about her children going out to parties and how she instructed them, to my understanding, to both enjoy the festivities and to be polite guests, while remaining ”good Indians”. She told them first of all not to take on any bad habits like smoking when they felt emotionally bad, meaning unaware of their choices, and to eat the food that was served as it was given, but to vomit all the bad American style food when they came home. She had always already prepared them good, healthy and pure food to eat afterwards. It should be reminded that vomiting is one of the cleansing techniques, *yoga kriyas*, that some still practice, but here the idea is used in very unconventional way as one should avoid unwanted substances and *vamana dhauti*

is done on empty stomach. Although this example is extreme, and I am definitely not claiming it would be a common attitude or custom of any sort, rather than a choice of maybe one family, or some families (as some friends were doing the same), I cautiously suggest that it reveals something telling of the need to stay true to national identity, in this case to cleanse the bodily system afterwards in a very concrete, physical way, while enjoying the global world. (For interesting examples on consumerism, local and global, see Mazzarella 2003; for mixing of substances Daniel 1987)

Above I cited the census of India, which is an official governmental publication based on massive data collection throughout the country. Notably, however, the census gives first the origin myth of the city name before going to the facts of building the city and the cencus data itself. In mentioning this I aim simply to bring to the fore the use of traditional narratives as inherently meaningful way of sharing and contextualizing knowledge in India, and as a typical Indian communicative strategy. Indians love their stories, and it has a sound place in their communication, even in official genres such as the census report. I claim that it is the profoundly intertextual context of Indian communication that makes the concept and understanding of yoga in India very different from its interpretation in non-Indian contexts.

2.2 Data and informants

In the field I had innumerable conversations about yoga, in connection to yoga classes and yoga events, meeting people outside yoga classes, doing semi-structured interviews, and basically anywhere. I had my first meeting with the one contact who had been recommended to me in advance on the second day that I was on the city. The next days I started scouting which yoga schools I would choose as my research base. I attended regularly yoga classes of two separate yoga styles and in three schools, but visited many others. Towards the end of my stay I also sometimes observed classes[7]. Class attendance as a form of participant observations was essential. Not only did it allow me to experience and build on the embodied knowledge of yoga but it also helped me to build rapport with the people. I visited the deemed to be University[8], Swami

[7] It must be added that observing a yoga class and understanding at least partly what is actually taking place in terms of yoga, is an art I have later practiced for years and still continue to do so: one has to learn both the verbal and the embodied language of each practice genre to be able to understand and interpret of what is actually going on. Of course, in Bangalore when I did only observe a class I was able to see more clearly some social nuances and curious details like ladies staying decent in inversions by tying a yoga belt around their hip for the kurta stay put, preventing any intimate areas to be revealed.

[8] The University Grants Comission of India has named the institution in 2002 as a Deemed to be University. However, popularly it was called simply as a deemed University, and for example not a Yoga

Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana or S-VYASA, on separate day trips a few times and also stayed on the campus for over a week for an international Yoga Conference. As I wanted also to hear some individual narratives, that were hard to get, and tried to get people to reflect on their knowledge and experience of their practice, I carried out a questionnaire. The method was to engage in participant observation and especially the conversations, informed by the questions stemming from research literature, and then to analyze the data with again theoretical literature.

If I roughly categorize the contents of the discussions, few central themes came up. Many teachers had come to yoga due to health problems and as they were happy to witness the power of yoga and the effects of the practice, they became teachers because they wanted to share the knowledge as a great tool for a holistically fuller life. Also, quite a number of people, young and old, had the experience of impression that yoga is quite difficult subject both theoretically and practically, and were bit startled by the idea that they should either do it or talk about it. Some of them had been forced to do yoga in school or were exposed to the popular imagery. There were also many occasions in form of semi-formal interviews and *darshans*, spiritual talks, that were often repeating the ”official” narrative of yoga, drawing from yoga scriptures, hindu mythology and the teachings of the yoga style they were propagating. Naturally, there were also exceptions as a few informants had developed their own synchronistic approach outside any structured system, or better said, had outgrown such.

The yoga styles I studied were the style promoted by VYASA and Iyengar Yoga, and the teachers with whom I chose to take classes continuously were experts on their field with very good reputations. One school I attended was at the time in a big, barren community hall, the second was in a hall inside a temple area, and the third was in a nice yoga hall with Patañjali statue and all necessities. I attended also trial classes on a bare rooftop, in a park and many simple halls. Surely there are wellness or spa like yoga centers in India, imitating maybe the sensual and sensory aesthetics of Western yoga centers (see Bar 2013, 22-23), but I never visited one. Another clear difference to Western yoga scene was the lack yoga apparel: people were practicing in trackpants and t-shirts or as women often did in their local costume of *salwar kameez,* loose pants and a tunic, that surely covered all intimate areas, like hips and shoulders. I was told by one Iyengar yoga teacher that in the main institute, in Pune, even the females were shorts and t-shirts, but in Bangalore no local women would wear shorts. I also adhered to

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University. If I called it a University it was corrected.

covering outfits despite the heat. The lack of commercial spirituality as seen in the West, or sold to the Westerners in India, was mostly absent in Indian yoga halls, even if religious accessories were widely available and used. Then again, a panel with a sacred symbol OM has quite a different meaning contextwise on an Indian wall, to that of a Western one, despite the genuine interest and respect for it.

2.2.1 Processing and the validity of the data

Since I did my fieldwork already 15 years ago, I have been asked by many, mainly non-anthropologists, whether the data I gathered is still valid. I believe it is. Although it is not customary for master's level work to have such a gap, it is quite common for proper ethnographies. Nevertheless, it poses a question of memory and validity of dealing truthfully the data. Therefore, I feel compelled to describe a bit the process of handling the data.

Before putting the project on a shelf, I had transcribed the taped interviews, rewritten most contents of my field notes books and all of the questionnaire answers in digital format and processed them. By processing I mean that I had highlighted the most interesting parts and had also organized the data under prominent themes, but had left the data in the ”raw form” of my notebooks and my insights were still kept separate. When I now returned to the material it was highly relevant that I had not yet converted the data into the form of my interpreted analysis, as my perspectives have changed a lot and I have been able to read the material that I collected with fresh eyes. Naturally some context-specific meanings have been lost, but as my knowledge of yoga has expanded over the years, new meanings have also been gained. For example, when revising the transcription of one essential interview, I was able to understand many parts that I had not appreciated earler. My problem never was that I did not have material, on the contrary, I had lots of it. The computer file which gathered the material under prominent themes had been 249 pages long! So the problem was rather how to find the essence of the material, as there were a lot of interesting possibilities. I also wrote a blog while on the field, and I started my return to the project by reading it all. Returning mostly to the personal feelings about being on the field, written mostly in stream of consciousness format really brought me back to the field, and the memories become alive and vivid again.

2.3 Ethical and critical reflection

To the best of my ability I have followed ethical conduct throughout my fieldwork and in presenting the data. When I introduced myself in the field, I always stated that I was doing my master's thesis, or a study project on yoga when it seemed as a better expression to make people understand what I was doing. Some yoga practitioners were curious whether I was learning yoga mainly as an intellectual enterprise or to really learn yoga, and to them I answered quite truthfully that I was trying to do both, which proved to be essential in having any credential to get into deeper conversations with them. Surely, had I been more experienced and knowledgeable, the conversations would have been quite different. For the purpose it this work perhaps my ignorance and eagerness were also an asset. Probably some did not want to waste their time, yet, others wanted to help me to better understand yoga. I did not receive any secret knowledge, but there were some conversations which included quite strong claims and expressions about conduct of others' and I have tried to find a balance of presenting the data that is anthropologically interesting, but does not bring shame on any instances. My attempt is to be respectful both to all the people who shared they time and ideas with me and to the subject. The aim is to shed some light on the social reality of contemporary yoga in India from the perspective of narratives in a way that the outcome is somehow coherent and balanced.

At the same time, as an anthropologist I cannot present a polished narrative and avoid completely touching topics that insiders might find unpleasant or irrelevant for the "true" representation of yoga. Parry (1998, 206) for example notes how his informant regarded his sociological interest as completely irrelevant in comparison to the worthwhile knowledge of metaphysical truth. As an anthropologist I was always drawn to contradictions, which I suspect some my informants might want to polish out. Nevertheless, as an anthropological enterprise this thesis has paradigmatic expectations to fulfill. On the other hand, it must be said, I find it impossible to subscribe to the intellectual skepticism of Alter (2003, 2008), even if I would not fully embrace a position of cultural relativism either. I am not oblivious of the politics of and around yoga, but I have thoughtfully chosen my framework otherwise. As I have explained, I am also only sharing material that I have gathered on the field. Perhaps delimiting the material again and again to only my fieldwork data has been the hardest task of all, yet, the most crucial one.

For the classes that I attended I paid the amount that was asked like any regular student. However, I did not choose teachers who offered me price for Westeners, and

too eager to have me as a student. In the Indian religious yoga market (see Burger 2006) separate pricings for local and non-locals, especially for Westeners, are common. In general I chose yoga schools and informants who were devoted to yoga and honest in their approach. In one occasion I stopped being in contact with one very interesting informant as he had other motives as well. As I was engaging into the participant observation fully with my own body, it was of most importance that I could fully trust the people I was interacting with and their interest in yoga was honest. Therefore, any misunderstandings in this work are my responsibility.

Not unlike any other striving student of anthropology on their first fieldwork, I was faulty of many beginner mistakes, first one not having a clear research plan before going to the field. However, the existing research literature on yoga was quite different in early 2000 compared to 2020—then it was dominated by indological or orientalist religious studies—and however I would have been prepared my interests were bound to change on the field, as it did. Naturally this affected which kind of material I was able to gather. In the end, I did manage to collect a lot of narratives that I believe could be of interest to others too. Should I do the research now, obviously it would be constructed in an entirely different way[9].

This work has been written under the pressure of pandemic, meeting an ultimate deadline, and it has greatly affected the course of the writing process. Not only have I been alienated from academic discourse after such a long brake, writing in a non-native language proved to be quite a task, even if I use English as a steady working language and have done my training in English. Under very demanding circumstances I had to give myself a permission to use direct quotations more extensively than I would have liked, or what is customary, as a way to get the work done. The difference between the objectified and embodied knowledge has also crystallized to me working under multiple stress factors as both self-employed yoga teacher and attempting to write this thesis: even among the hardest of hard stress situations I am always able to perform the embodied knowledge including explaining it, whereas producing objectified knowledge has been at times a cognitive impossibility, which emphasizes their entirely different construction in human physiology also. Any muscle or language will wither unused. My

[9] It took me years and several yoga study months in Pune to understand that the traditional ethnographies I had read on kinship systems, castes and rituals had ill prepared me to face the social reality of contemporary life in a megacity, leaving me with a unilateral outlook on ”Indian way of life”. Focusing so strictly only on yoga, living alone and not engaging in many other daily activities with the locals did not open my horizon on a more general view either. I read some of the most interesting ethnographies about middle class and their negotiations of local and global only after the fieldwork (e.g. Favero 2005; Mazzarella unpublished, 2003a, 2003b)

writing process thus had several unanticipated hardships. Nevertheless, I feel that this final product stands on its own merits as a study of yoga practice and teaching in urban India in the early 20th century.

3 HISTORY OF YOGA AS A GRAND NARRATIVE

In this chapter, I first discuss the history of yoga traditions. I start by presenting two typologies formed by De Michelis (2003, 2008) of pre-modern yoga and modern yoga and compare them with popular, practitioner typologies and ideas. Thereafter, I will present a more detailed, yet, a short account of pre-modern yoga traditions, drawing mainly from the overwiews by Mallison and Singleton (2017) and White (2012) of the plurality and development of ideas and practice. Simultaneously, it is this intertextual library of textual descriptions, which serves as an kind of an open database: also contemporary traditions and individual practitioners draw from it to compile their interpretations of yoga, Textual forms potentiate recontextualization. Therefore, the history of yoga presents the extant theory of yoga, which in following chapter 4 on 'knowledge' will be discussed as objectified knowledge. The presentation is by no means exhaustive. It should be seen as a cursory overview of main some main ideas and developments.

However, the selection includes ideas that were, in one way or another, relevant also in the narratives of yoga I encountered during my fieldwork. When the most common Indian practitioner views contradict the scholarly depiction, I make a point of it. In this sense, I am using the local narratives to reflect on the scholarly narrations. The history of "modern yoga" that has attracted the interest of the scholars did not draw so much dominance in the narratives of the locals and is excluded, despite the historical merits. The popular narratives emphasized contuinuity, whereas many scholars have put the claimed continuity of yoga tradition to a truth test. For me, then, it is also interesting to the concepts of 'tradition' and 'history' in the anthropological sense: what essentially is tradition, and do we have the authority to evaluate the authenticity of traditions from outside? Lastly, I present the traditional authoritative sources of knowledge: the authority of Sanskritic scriptures and the institutionalized authority of the *guru*.

3.1 History of yoga traditions

Yoga is a vast subject and it has never constituted one, clearly defined entity. It is impossible to present more than a fragmentary account of the tradition that we now know and understand as yoga in this work. The long history of yoga has a major research topic in the growing and fascinating scholarship on yoga. For example, a five-year research project, 'The *Haṭha Yoga* Project', funded by European Research Council, and based at SOAS, University of London, has just come to conclusion. James

Mallison, Mark Singleton, Jason Birch and Daniela Bevilacqua are four of the six researchers, whose influential work has enlightened the field significantly: the first three by translating and bringing forth yoga texts that had not been discovered before, and Bevialcqua by studying the lived practices among the ascetics. There is also another five-year ERC-funded project "*AyurYoga"*, which is based at the Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies at Vienna University, at the Department for History and Classics at the University of Alberta, and at Inform. Two other scholars whose works opened the new line of historical research were Elizabeth de Michelis and Joseph Alter.

In this section I aim to present some of the main concepts, bearing in mind that the readers might not be familiar with the intricacies of the history, texts and practices of yoga. The real task is to find a balance in between the trap of an overly simplified typology and that of an overly detailed one and so to bring insight and structure to the ongoing history of change and continuity that marks yoga.

3.1.1 Typology of premodern and modern yoga

De Michelis (2008, 18) present a very good question: "How can one navigate through the complex panorama of pre-modern forms of yoga without getting thoroughly confused?" She suggest as a heuristic tool a simplified model representing yoga as a building with four cornerstones, positioned according to architectural principles and supporting the actual fabric of the building. In her model, the first three cornerstones are *karmayoga*, the yoga of (primarily ritual) action, *jñanayoga,* the yoga of knowledge (understood as metaphysical "gnosis") and *bhaktiyoga,* the yoga of devotion (toward the deity and often also toward a teacher and lineage). These are represented in the *Bhagavad Gīta (BG)*[10]] The fourth cornerstone is *tantra*, an esoteric form of yoga. According to de Michelis' suggestion all forms of yoga could be analyzed with reference to these components: if yoga is translated as "discipline", these four qualities, could "be understood as yoga's cardinal directions or as conceptual filters through which the discipline is actually interpreted and applied. Different mixtures and emphases of these will produce different types of yoga."(De Michelis 2008, 18).

Pre-modern styles of yoga and meditative practice commonly rely on Indic philosophical complex of *karma*, fruit of past actions – *saṃsāra,* reincarnation – *mokṣa,*

[10] *Bhagavad Gīta* is part of one of the main Hindu epics, *Mahābharāta*, and is often regarded as one of the main yoga texts although it is not mainly a yoga text. It has also been referred to "the catechism" of Hinduism

liberations from this ongoing cycle. De Michelis views them as the theoretical architectural principles in her metaphorical scheme. This set of beliefs postulates the idea that human beings undergo reincarnations at least partly according to their past actions, and liberation from this ongoing cycle is both possible and desirable. Yoga, then, is ”the discipline whereby one attains, or gets progressively closer to, *mokṣa* (or *nirvāṇa*). (De Michelis 2008, 18-19) In addition, movement toward *mokṣa* is also aided by, ”Individual, institutional, and social complexes that support and nurture, among many other things, the cultivation, the shaping, and transmission of yoga and related practices.” (De Michelis 2008, 19). Priests and *sādhus*, *gurus* and their followers, and the lineages thus embody the texts they ”revere and propagate” and constitute an additional form of authority and institutional structure. Yet, while there are also pilgrimage centers, sacred places, wayside shrines; temples, monasteries, hermitages and households keeping the practices alive, de Michelis reminds that yoga’s institutional structures are more fluid and polycentric both theoretically and performatively than non-Asian may observe. For transmission of yogic knowledge, the emphasis is ideally on one–to–one teaching. (De Michelis 2008, 19).

This typology is partly in line with narratives that practitioners, and also my informants, have used to describe yoga, and the different paths to salvation. In the popular typology of yoga, the first three , *karma, jnana* and *bhakti* yoga were perceived as the yoga paths of *Bhagavad G*ītа[11], and as such presented revered ideals. The popular typology included also *haṭhayoga*, which was understood as “physical yoga”,and *rājayoga*, the “royal” yoga, sometimes associated with the yoga of Patañjali’s *yogasūtras*. It is noteworth that in the descriptions of the major forms of yoga *tantra* was not so often included by my informants, quite the contrary, especially the orthodox Hindus seemed to exclude it completely.

Another, a similar kind of typology has become almost normative amongst scholars and well informed contemporary western practitioners. Especially as

[11] Mallison and Singleton (2017, 473-474) and Killingley (2013, 29) point out that against popular and scholar belief *BG* did not in fact teach the triad of *karmyoga, jñanayoga* and *bhaktiyoga*: they are presented but not together as a triad, and there many other yogas too. Killingley (2013, 29) suggest that it was Vivekananda, one of the most influential figures of yoga renaissance, who described *BG* as harmonizing this triad. In Vivekananda’s teaching *bhaktiyoga,* love or devotional yoga, *karmayoga*, work or practical yoga, *jñanayoga*, knowledge or intellectual yoga, and additionally *rājayoga,* yoga of Patañjali or mystical yoga, was a recurrent theme throughout, whereas *hathayoga* he saw as mere gymnastics. Preceding Vivekananda the four yogas were part of Keshub’s presentation, but as Vivekananda was the first Indian yoga teacher who brought yoga to the West 1893, his influence and what he selected to be presented as yoga to the world was quite significant. (See de Michelis 2004; Killingley 2013). It is simply one example of selection that has grown to be understood as one valid description, or a narrative of yoga.

contemporary yoga oftentimes understood as *āsana* practice has gained prevalence and therefore attracted also the interest of the scholars, they are employing the term of ’modern postural yoga’ as presented by de Michelis (2004). I find this term problematic, but as it has been incorporated into the nomenclature of yoga scholarships, it needs to be presented here also. ’Modern postural yoga’ is part of a typology De Michelis (2004, 187-189; 2008, 21-22) presents, again as heuristic tool. Her typology consists of Modern Psychosomatic Yoga, Modern Postural Yoga, Modern Meditational Yoga, Modern Denominational Yoga, and in the 2008 edition of her book, she added the neo-Hindu style of Modern Yoga. She sees these types of yoga to each derive from Vivekananda’s *Rāja-Yoga.* However, in her study (2004), she places a great deal more emphasis on Modern Postural Yoga:

> Its key ideological themes were already present in South Asian culture toward the end of the nineteenth century and came to full flower from the 1920’s. This type of yoga is especially receptive to influences from the martial and gymnastic traditions of both indigenous and Western origin. It often encompasses irenic or more confrontational notions of Hindu revivalism, nationalism, or supremacy (or both). (De Michelis 2008, 22)

Modern Postural Yoga (MPY) places greater stress on physical practices: yoga postures, *āsanas,* and yogic breathing, *prānāyāma*. Relatively pure contemporary type ares: lyengar Yoga; P. Jois' Astanga Yoga. In contrast, Modern Psychosomatic Yoga (MPsY) of Vivekananda focuses on practice (experiential epistemology), has few normative doctrinal restrictions and is described by privatized religion/cultic milieu. ”The bedrock of this type is each school’s interpretation of Patañjali’s *āṣṭāṅgayoga,* to which other elements from (Neo-)Hindu or Western esoteric traditions (or both) are added.” (De Michelis 2008, 21-22). Relatively pure contemporary types of MPsY are: Santa Cruz Yoga Institute; Kaivalyadhama at Lonavla; Sivananda and his disciples; Himalayan Institute (Swami Rama). (De Michelis 2004, 187; 2008, 21-22).

Modern Meditational Yoga (MMY) relies mainly on techniques of concentration and meditation. Relatively pure contemporary types are: early Trancendental Meditation; Chinmoy; some modern Buddhist groups. According to de Michelis both MPY and MMY stress the orthoperformative side of participation within a limited ‘classroom’ or ‘session’ type frame-work. De Michelis (2004, 187). Both started to develop from 1920’s and include elements of the MPsY and neo-Hindu style of Modern Yoga (De Michelis 2008, 22). Modern Postural Yoga is, nevertheless, the most prevalent.

> MPY…have contributed most to developing and codifying relatively advanced and sophisticated canons of postural theory and practice. Their religion-philosophical teachings, however, are relatively unfocussed and usually polyvalent and therefore mostly compatible with transnational trends tending towards secularization or acculturation.. … by and large, when people talk about

> ”yoga” in everyday English, this is the type of practice that is intended.” (de Michelis 2008, 22).

Lastly, Modern Denominational Yoga (MDY) focus on neo-guru(s) and on a school's own teachings and it adheres to each school's own beliefs, rules and sources of authority. Sociologically, MDY can be described as cultic and/or sectarian. Relatively pure contemporary types of MDY include: Brahma Kumaris; Sahaja Yoga; ISKCON; Rajneeshism; late Transcendental Meditation. (De Michelis 2004, 188). MDY’s started to appear from the 1950s onward, and became noticeable from the 1960’s with charismatic Indian teachers (De Michelis 2008, 22).

Most, if not all, of the newest scholarship on MPY is done on yoga practice outside India, and for me the question is if this typology is perhaps better suited for some of the Western yogas, if admittedly, it is difficult to make such distinctions due to the transnational character of many yoga communities. According to de Michelis’ typology, the yoga styles that I studied in Bangalore would be categorized as Iyengar Yoga, which in her model is ”a pure” example of MPY. The yoga of Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana, on the other hand, would fall in the category of neo-Hindu style of Modern yoga having quite strong nationalistic undertone.

> It should also be stressed that the present typology does not include those Indian schools of Modern Yoga active only in India and through the medium of local languages. It does, however, include those Indian schools that rely mainly on the English language for the diffusion of their teachings, and which also have centres, or at least significant contacts, abroad. (De Michelins 2004, 189).

De Michelis (2004, 189) herself says that “as with all typologies, the one just discussed also fails to mirror the complexities of real-life situations and must therefore be understood as a heuristic device” and suggests (2008, 22) that it could be improved. However, it seems that there has not been much discussion around the typology, rather, the ’Modern Postural Yoga’ has become a term that quite many yoga scholars use without questioning it. Also, I have personal experience on deliberately not using it in conversations and being corrected by others that the ’yoga’ that I am talking about is in fact ’Modern Postural Yoga’: there is always a risk of demonstrating ignorance if one does not adhere to the mainstream terminology. While I do definitely understand the rationale behind the attempt to clarify the vocabulary and nomenclature, I am prone to take a more of an *emic* stand, respecting the insider belief framework and by using language similar to that of the people studied. Although objective, *etic* accounts are essential to any scholarly enterprise, nevertheless, across my discussions in the field, Indian practitioners consistently rejected distinctions such as ”modern” and ”postural” even if they would be practicing *āsanas.* When I spoke of ’modern yoga’, I was always

corrected that there is no such thing, “yoga is yoga”. On the other hand, when I spoke of yoga I was sometimes corrected that you are actually speaking of *hathayoga,* physical yoga.

Thus, if a scholar wants to engage in a dialogue with Indian practitioners of yoga, I suspect one best avoid the term ’Modern Postural Yoga’ when approaching practitioners and *gurus*. Notably, B. K. S. Iyengar denied Singleton’s multiple interview requests when the latter was working on his book *Yoga Body* (2010). We can only speculate about the reasons, but I recall an interview in which Iyengar explains his view that there is no ”modern yoga” and he has repeatedly emphasized that his teaching is Patañjali yoga. However, Singleton (2008, 3) does addresses the question of mutual prejudice between ”those who *study* yoga professionally, meaning academically, and ”those who do it”. He (2008, 3) quite frankly admits: ”[w]estern academic writers have tended to denigrate (or, more often, simply ignore) practical, contemporary expressions of yoga in favor of the purely philosophical and theoretical.” Additionally, he acknowledges that practitioners often consider academics to be elitists, who are irrelevant ”to the real task at hand,” that is, practicing yoga, and who lack the respect and reverence appropriate to the study of yoga. (Singleton 2008, 3). In my view, therefore, we need a better language to discuss yoga, one that does not exclude local narratives. Moreover, scholars should also show more interest in the Indian narratives on yoga practice and history.

3.1.2 History of “pre-modern” yoga: short introduction

In the beginning of this millennium it was quite common to hear a narrative of yoga’s ancient history, dating back 4000 years or more, all the way back to the Indus Valley civilization. The *Paśupati* seal, the seal of ’proto-Śiva’ is said to portray the god of ascetics and yogis seated in a meditative yoga posture, and is taken as proof of existing yoga practice. I have heard these references and arguments of both ancient and newer iconography to represent the ancient yoga tradition especially in India during my field work. Similarly, on a later visit to Pune, during the 2014 yoga event, *Yogānuśāsanam,* , Swati Chanchani presented a beautiful lecture titled ”*Yoginis* and Indian art” with this argument to the degree and conviction that I believe it is true for the people who say so. S-VYASA lectures also often include these kinds of arguments. However, yoga research conducted by non-Indian scholars typically explores the history of yoga from the historian’s perspective and they have not been equally convinced about the ancient roots of yoga. To be clear, from my point of view both narratives are valuable in their

own right. The short overview of the history, which I present next is crucial not only as the teachings are relevant to this day, but also as it presents a kind of an authorative narrative of yoga, ”the grand narrative” which develops with growth of knowledge.

Despite the popularity of arguments on yoga’s antiquity, according to Mallison and Singleton (2017, xii-xiii) there is no textual or archeological evidence that would support the claim of systematic yoga practice in the Indus Valley civilization or Vedic text corpus. Yoga did appear in the earliest Indian scriptures, the *Vedas,* which are the the textual foundation of orthodox ’Vedic’ Hinduism: the oldest one, *Ṛg Veda* (15th to 12th century BCE) indicates use of visionary meditation and suggests a mystical ascetic tradition. The *Atharva Veda* (c. 1000 BCE) also mentions practices that may be precursor to later techniques of posture and breath-retention. (Mallison and Singleton (2017, xii-xiii) The word *yoga* is for the first time mentioned in the *Ṛg Veda* as the yoke that was placed on a draft-animal to link it to a plow or chariot, mostly in reference to chariot of war (Mallison and Singleton (2017, xiii; White 2012, 3). In *Mahābhārata,* one of the two major Indian epics, a warrior who knew he was about to die was described as a *yoga-yukta*, which translates literally ”yoked to yoga”, yoga meaning a chariot. Gods too travelled on *yoga*s across heaven and between earth (White 2012, 3). Mallison and Singleton (2017, xiii) state: ”although *Mahābhārata* incorporates also extensive instructions on yogic practice, and the Vedic image of yoking evolves into a metaphor of the soteriological method (…), it would be wrong to read this backwards as proof of similar understanding within the Vedas themselves.”

New groups of renunciant ascetics, *Śramaṇas* (c. 500 BCE) developed probably independently of the Brahmanical Vedic traditions, although influenced by them, and included Buddhists, Jains and Ājīvakas. They were interested ”in a kind of an ontological suicide”: an escape from the cycle of rebirth, *saṃsāra,* and from the suffering caused by *karma.* This led to the development of techniques of mediation, *dhyāna,* for that purpose, that is, to gain *nirvāna*, ’extinguishing’, or *mokṣa*, ’liberation’. These ideas are only later included into the Vedic teachings and appear for the fist time among the Śramana traditions. Their practices were not called yoga, not until later when *dhyānaygoga* is mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* (c 3rd century BCE to 3rd century CE). Both Śramana and Vedic traditions speak of meditational techniques and of ascetics that practice arduous practices known as *tapas.* In Sanskrit *tapas* means literally ’heat’ but is often translated as austerity. As a method it continues to be complementary part of ascetic yoga practice today and was seen as a necessary preliminary for yoga practice

also in the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra.* (Mallison and Singleton (2017, xiii-xiv.) In general, *tapas* has come to be understood as discipline, but the classical meaning is much stronger. As Bevilacqua (2017, 188) explains: ”*Haṭha Yoga* is often related to *tapasyā* (austerity). The word *tapasyā* (austerity) comes from *tap* (to heat) and *tapas* (heat), which mean the inner mental-spiritual fire resulting from austerities accomplished through strong determination.”

In Brahmanical texts, the early Upaniṣads (c.7th to 1st century BCE) are the first ones devoted to the teachings of ascetic renunciates. The earliest extant description of yoga was in *Kāṭha Upaniṣad*, (c. 3rd century BCE, as the god of Death Yama reveals yoga as an entire regimen to a young ascetic Naciketas. The analogy of between living as a human being and riding a chariot includes now the soteriology of liberation. (Mallison and Singleton 2017, x; White 2012, 4.)

> The body is the chariot itself, the self (*ātman*) is a rider in the chariot, the intellect (*buddhi*) is the charioteer, the mind *manas*) is the reins, the senses (*indriya*) are the horses, and the sense objects (*viṣaya*) are the paths taken by the senses (3.3-4). If the senses are not brought under control, the result is rebirth. On the other hand, one who is able to control the senses by means of the mind, as a charioteer reins his horses, is not reborn (3.7-8). He attains the highest state, which is identified as *puruṣa*, the indwelling person. (Mallison and Singleton (2017, xv.)

Kāṭha Upaniṣad draws its the terms for the constituent elements from the ancient dualistic *Saṃkhya* philosophy, which is also grounds the yoga of *Yoga Sūtras* and *Bhagavadgīta* and other texts and schools of yoga. (White 2012, 4) In *Saṃkhya* suffering is caused by wrong knowledge.

> In the metaphysical narrative of *Saṃkhya* the material principle of existence, known as *prakṛti*, and the spiritual principle, called *puruṣa*, fall out of balance, resulting in a devolution into material existence. During the course of this process, *puruṣa* confuses itself with the 24 *tattvas* (’elements’ or ’principles’) or *prakṛti*, which include the senses, intellect and mind, as well as the grosser elements. The human condition is therefore characterized by the delusory identification of the individual with the elements of *prakṛti*, the result of which is suffering and rebirth. (Mallison and Singleton 2017, xv-xvi.)

Bhagavadgīta is part of *Mahābhārata*, and is significant in regard to its teachings on the practice of yoga. It seeks to appropriate yoga from the renunciate milieu and teaches that yoga is compatible with worldly activity: what is enunciated is the fruits of one’s actions, performed according to one’s caste and life stage. As such it affirms Brahmanical religion (Mallison and Singleton (2017, xvi.) Textual references to yoga rapidly multiply around third century BCE, not only in Hindu but also Jain and Buddhist sources. Critical mass is reached 700 to 100 years later. (White 2012, 3-5.)

The *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali is the best known expression of yoga from this period, consisting of 196 *sūtra*s on yogic techniques and states. Maas (2013 in Mallison and Singleton 2017, xvi-xvii; also 2018, 52-53) argues that the *sūtra*s and their

commentary are in fact two layers of a combined text, and Mallison and Singleton refer to the combined text as *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* as per his recommendation. The *Sūtra* portion was compiled from older sources between 325-425 CE. (Mallison and Singleton 2017, xvi-xvii.) In this work I use this term when referring to their works, but otherwise I refer to (Patañjali's) *Yogasūtra*, as it is usually known. As already mentioned, the metaphysical basis of *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* comes from *Saṃkhya* and is also influenced by Buddhism. It offers practical means to escape suffering and rebirths, including the well-known yoga of eight 'limbs'or 'auxiliaries'. According to Mallison and Singleton (2017, xvii): "*Pātañjalayogaśāstra* represents a Brahmanical attempt to appropriate yoga from the Śramana traditions". Around the 12th century, yoga, with *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* as the root text, was recognized as one of the philosophical systems, *darśanas*, and was subsequently included in the list of six orthodox *darśanas.* Ultimately, *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* became an important reference to many other formulations of yoga. As an orthodox system it is also of special interest to scholars. It has enjoyed an enormous appeal among both practitioners and scholars globally. (Mallison and Singleton 2017, xvii.)

Yoga was important also in the tantric traditions, the dominant 'religion' of India in the period of 6th to 13th century, constituting predominantly of Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and Buddhist traditions. *Tantra* can refer to a text or a "system of ritual or essential instructions', but more specifically "it indicates a body of soteriological knowledge, ritual and praxis regarded as distinct from, and more powerful than, Vedic tradition" (Mallison and Singleton 2018, xviii). The Tantras are pivotal in introducing innovations in theory and practice. With Tantra, the goal is no longer liberation of suffering, but rather self-deification: one becomes the deity that has been the object of one's meditation. Also the construct of 'subtle body', in which the body of the practitioner becomes identified with the universe, was an innovation of the tantras. (White 2012, 13-14.) Tantric yogis may meditate also on the body as microcosm of the cosmos, and in some systems the body is conceived of as composed of subtle channels, *nādī*s, which can be purified to conduct the vital energy, *prāṇa*, which can then be manipulated and directed. Also the *cakra,* 'wheel', system became blueprint of the 'yogic body'.

However, there are aspects in the Tantras that have not been approved by orthodox Hindus, who for example observe carefully the principles of ritual purity. Commonly the two types of tantra are regarded as right hand and left hand tantra. In India, the left hand is used in the toilet and hence it is thought impure.

> In the exoteric Tantras, visualization, ritual offerings, worship, and the use of mantras were the means to the gradual realization of one's identity with the absolute. In later, esoteric traditions, however, the expansion of consciousness to a divine level was instantaneously triggered through the consumption of forbidden substances: semen, menstrual blood, feces, urine, human flesh, and the like. Menstrual or uterine blood, which was considered to be the most powerful among these forbidden substances, could be accessed through sexual relations with female Tantric consorts. Variously called *yoginis*, *ḍākinīs*, or *dūtīs*, these were ideally low-caste human women who were considered to be possessed by, or embodiments of, Tantric goddesses. (White 2012, 14.)

In Tantras yoga as a term has variety of meanings, and in a broad sense it can simply mean ’practice’ or ’discipline’. (White 2012, 13-14.) It is noteworthy that during my fieldwork I very rarely encountered any references to the tantras, and in those rare cases when it did occur, it was hushed up with an explicit unwillingness to discuss the topic and accompanied by non-verbal body language indicating dislike or even abhorrence.

*Haṭhayoga, ’*yoga of forceful exertion’ emerges as a new regimen and a comprehensive system in 900-1100 CE. According to White (2012, 15) its innovation is of the yogic body as pneumatic, hydraulic and a thermodynamic system, and particularly the practice of breath control is refined. *Haṭhayoga’s* method draws from yoga of Patañjali and tantra, but also includes physical practices found in neither: cleansing techniques, non-seated postures/ *āsanas,* complex methods of breath control/ *prānāyāma,* and physical means of manipulating the vital energy/ *mudrās.* There are similarities to the earlier ascetic practices, but the methods of *Haṭhayoga* are not as extreme: the techniques are taught with more worldly yogis in mind. Mallison and Singleton (2017, xx) suggest that adaptation of ascetic method for a wider, non-ascetic audience is likely the reason for the composition of the texts of *haṭhayoga.* Also, they state that ”by 18th century *haṭhayoga* and Patañjali yoga were seen as one and the same, and *haṭha*’s rise to orthodox acceptance had been cemented by the compilation of a corpus of Upaniṣads (later referred to as the Yoga Upaniṣads) that borrowed wholesale from the texts of *haṭhayoga”* (Mallison and Singleton (2017, xx-xxi.)

In regard to the postural yoga of the modern day, the greatest legacy of *haṭhayoga* is its practical side: the combination of postures/ *āsanas*, breath control/ *prānāyāma*, locks/ *bandha*s, and seals/ *mudrā*s. These techniques are described during the heyday of *Haṭha yoga* corpus, 900-1300 CE, in increasing detail, but the canonical number of 84 *āsanas* is reached only later. In *Haṭhayoga* postures, breath control, and the three levels of meditative concentration leading to *samadhi* are said to form a six-limbed yoga, which is common also with other systems of yoga and as such it is distinguished from the eight limbed yoga of the *Yoga Sūtras*. (White 2012, 16-17; for a more in depth discussion on the development of different systems of yoga see e.g.

Mallison and Singleton 2016.) It should be also noted that in contemporary language *hatha yoga* often refers to any physical yoga practice, which does not necessarily include a system associated with *tapas*. In many European countries also very gentle and soft yoga styles have been called *hatha yoga.* To make a distinction, when referring to the medieval *haṭhayoga, a* diacritic will be used, whereas when referring to the more general notion of *hatha yoga,* the spelling will not include a diacritic. Adaptation has always been a feature of yoga's history, and during the last 150 years yoga has been adapting and transforming in response to globalization to modernization: of the traditional Indian forms of yoga practice especially *haṭhayoga* has undergone radical transformations with the encounter of foreign ideas and practices (Mallison and Singleton 2017, xxi).

3.1.3 Tradition and history

Yoga has often been discussed in terms of tradition, and the traditional views on yoga are often used to frame, legitimize and evaluate contemporary forms of yoga, at least in India among the dedicated practitioners. In the early 2000s it was quite common to use expressions that implied a continuing tradition, continuum of history that spanned 2000 or even 3000 years. In such circumstances, yoga scholars have, of course, examined the recent history of yoga and documented the emergence of contemporary forms of yoga practice. In doing so, they have found many discontinuities and innovations and so narratives of long-standing yoga traditions seem inaccurate at best. In particular, what is now widely referred to as modern postural yoga, a term coined by Elizabeth de Michelis (2004), is not some unbroken tradition of yoga practice but the result of an effort to re-invent yoga.

My own approach to the concept of tradition draws on Siikala and Siikala (2005, 38-57). They argued that, historically, the "invention of tradition" is connected to the disruption of the old and the building of new states and national identities. The Siikalas (2005, 38) state: "Tradition and traditions have been rediscovered, both in academic discussions and in the lives of people. In particular, oral traditions connected to the mythical past are constantly being discussed, reinterpreted and recreated in many parts of the world." Within this historical context, the term "tradition" refers something connected with past, something vanished or vanishing which must be saved or revived.[12] As a scientific concept, then, "tradition" is a product of modernity, but it is

[12] The Siikalas place its roots in the German romanticism of 18th century, which celebrated the harmonious life of folk cultures as opposed to European civilizations corrupted by technology and science

not easy to define and often arouses mixed feelings. As the Siikalas (2005, 39) expound: ”Latin verb *tradere* to ”transmit” or ”hand down” something from past to present. Traditions mean literally ”the past in the present” and this is how it is intuitively understood in the folkloristic and anthropological literature”.

The Siikalas also observe tradition as inheritance, citing Shils (1981, 12; as cited in Siikala 2005, 40) ”the decisive criterion is that, having been created through human action, through thought and imagination, it is handed down from one generation to the next”. Drawing from Honko, the Siikalas (2005, 40; ref. Honko 1988, 9) picture ”tradition as a store which includes parts which are in use and parts which are waiting for memory or gradually vanishing: something is introduced, something is renewed, and at the same time something is dying out”, in short, it is a process and a potential. As a resource tradition can be used and must be recognized by its users. Tradition is about cultural continuity, that becomes apparent in times of change or when crossing cultural boundaries. Siikalas (2005, 41) state: ”The past in the present, tradition, becomes *tradition* when the link between the present and the ethnically or nationally relevant past becomes important”. They (2005, 44) also note that ”in most cultures there are ready models for the idea of the past as the moral authority for the present. Mythic narratives represent these models: they show how the prevailing state of affairs divinely authorised in the beginning of time” . If past is morally authoritative, and traditions are renewed, how does history fit into the picture? Siikalas (2005, 44) argue that the “real” history may be irrelevant for people to whom representations of a sacred past are at stake.

Regarding history, Indian thinking has been criticized for its ahistoricity and for an overreliance on traditional narratives. Pollock (1989, 603) recounts that: ”perhaps no issue in Indian intellectual history has been as frequently commented upon and as univocally adjudicated as the tradition’s presumed lack of historical awareness”. Larson (1980, 305; as cited in Pollock 1989, 603) also argues that: ”South Asians themselves seldom if ever used [a historical] explanation … in South Asian environment, historical interpretation is no interpretations. It is zero category”. However, upon inspection, ”history” has close affinities with other types of narratives. For example, Pollock reminds that in Greco-Roman historiography legend and history are also often confused. (Pollock 1989, 604-605; see also Friedman 1992). Yet, he (1989, 606) also admits that while the realm of “facts” is problematic, it is an important element in traditional historical discourse, and it is precisely ”what the product of Sanskritic culture generally speaking lack”. Flood (1992, 103), also acknowledges that there is no historiography in

South Asia, with a few exceptions, that are similar to Greek, Arabic and European traditions.

As a result, Western scholars have often constructed India as ahistorical, mythical and irrational, as a contrast to a West that is seen as historical, scientific and rational (Flood 1996, 103-104). This prejudice is evident in both the yoga renaissance, in which practitioners sought to combine Indian "tradition" with "Western" scientific approaches, and also in the scholarship on the yoga renaissance, which have used "fact-based history" to dismiss "mythological" explanations (e.g. Alter 2008 and 2000; de Michelis 2004; Singleton 2010). Instead of treating yoga narratives as narratives in their own right, yoga scholarship has seen such narratives as claims that need to be evaluated according to their factuality rather than as forms of communication and storytelling (cf. Siikala and Siikala 2005).. For example, Alter (2008, 37) argues that the presentation of yoga's "absolute truths" in large events is problematic, as it would not stand up to historical scrutiny.

As Flood (1996, 104) points out, however, "the construction of India as the irrational 'other' has tended to hide the strongly 'rationalist' elements in Hindu culture (the science of ritual, grammar, architecture, mathematics, logic and philosophy)". Hinduism does have elaborate mythical narratives in which 'history', 'hagiography' and 'mythology' are not clearly distinct. For example, the Sanskrit narrative tradition of *itihāsa* contains both 'history' and 'myth' of Western categories. With these mythological narratives traditional values and identity are communicated, and seems to be of importance is the story being told and the sense of truth that is conveyed, remarks Flood. (1996, 104).

Pollock (1989) discusses *itihāsa* as causal events of "what actually has happened" and they can be contrasted with the Vedas, in which knowledge is transcendent. The Vedas thus are claimed to have no author and to lack historical referentiality. Pollock (1989, 609) therefore hypothesizes that "when Vedas were emptied of their "referential intention", other sorts of Brahmanical intellectual practices seeking to legitimate their truth-claims had to conform to this special model of what counts as knowledge" . He (1989, 610) concludes by stating that in Sanskritic India history is "denied in favor of a model of "truth" that accorded history no epistemological value or social significance".

I would like to pause a moment and consider this "model of truth," how it might differ from, for example, Western conceptions of truth, and also what principles or

frameworks support the model. Parry (1985, 207) for example states that in traditional Indian thought there is no conceptual divide between ‘religious’ and ‘scientific’ knowledge. The time concept is in India cyclical, not linear, and the concept of re-birth is at the core of Hinduism. Another distinct feature is that principles are understood to manifest in different forms and shapes. For example, the polytheistic Hindu pantheon is in fact a matter of one God and its many forms, and there is also no absolute distinction between deities and humans (Fuller 1992, 30). For example in a case where a new goddess is invented, it can be accepted as a new manifestation of an ancient goddess (see Narayanan 2000, 769-774). Also, Hinduism contains a sense of fluidity and permeability that structures everyday life profoundly (see Daniel, 1987 [1984]). Instead of things being either-or, processuality or a possibility of manifestation seems to be more at the core of Hinduism.

Unfortunately I cannot remember where and from whom I heard this the first time--was it an Indian or a fellow non-Indian yoga practitioner?—but amongst people who travel to Pune to practice yoga in one specific institute, there is a saying that somehow depicts India well: ”same, same, but different”. It means what it literally says, things can be simultaneously the same and different. I have witnessed both the use the creation myth from *Manusmṛiti* as a natural depiction of social division into *varnas,* and also the strong criticism of it by Indian intellectuals. Additionally, I have heard a scholar with a doctorate degree state that myths should be acknowledged as history, and another doctorate scholar explain that texts should be valued in their own context, as ancient mythology, and not be read literally.

Given these endless differences and endless debates, I adopt a different approach. I am not interested in subjecting yoga narratives to truth tests nor am I interested in tracing direct connections between contemporary yoga practices and ancient texts and traditions. Instead, I argue that when Indians refer to the ancient texts to legitimate their presentations in the current day, one should approach such actions as a communicative strategy. What is more interesting, then, is less the truth value or mythic orthodoxy of their claims than what such intertextuality (see Bakhtin in McGee & Warms, 2013), Bauman and Briggs 1992) accomplishes in the present.

3.2 Traditional authorative sources of knowledge

3.2.1 Textual authority of knowledge

Throughout this work you will encounter references from both scholars and informants that address textual authority. My discussions in the field, and the other material I gathered, were filled with references to yoga texts like *Yogasūtras* of Patañjali and *Haṭhayogaprādīpikā* or *Bhagavād Gīta,* to name a few most important ones. In India, talking about classical yoga tradition one cannot avoid hearing references to the sacred knowledge of *Vedas* and *Śāstras,* or to the sages, seers, *ṛṣi,* or saints, *munI,* who are considered the first to receive the sacred knowledge.

The *Vedas*, a large body of literature, composed in the sacred language Sanskrit, is revered as revelation, *śruti*, and also as the source of *dharma*, the ”power that upholds or supports society and the cosmos” (Flood 1996, 11). The *Vedas* consist four traditions (*Ṛg,Yajur, Sāma, Atharva).*, each divided in three of four categories of texts (*Saṃhitās, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, Upaniṣads)*. Scholars date the earliest text of the Vedas, *Ṛg Veda*, to around 1500–1200 BCE (Flood 1996, 36–37). As a term *veda* means ’knowledge’, which was revealed to the ancient sages, *ṛṣi*, and initially passed on as oral tradition. Quite remarkably, the contents of the Vedas have been transmitted both orally. with special memorization techniques, and in rituals for up to 3,000 years with only little change. They are primarily ritual, liturgical texts (Flood 1996, 11, 39) Although the status of *Vedas* as unifying Hinduism is contested, it is quite central.

> The *Veda* as revelation is of vital importance in understanding Hinduism, though its acceptance is not universal among Hindus and there are forms of Hinduism which have rejected the *Veda* and its legitimizing authority in the sanctioning of a hierarchical social order. However, all Hindu traditions makes one reference to the *Veda*, whether in its acceptance or rejection, and some scholars have regarded reference to its legitimizing authority as a criterion of being Hindu. (Flood 1996, 11).

The *Vedas* were written down only about thousand years after their composition. Writing itself had been regarded as polluting. However, sometimes younger material like the *Upaaniṣads,* or even writings of modern holy men and women, had been incorporated into the category of ’revelation’ (Flood 1996, 35). The youngest strata of *Veda* literature, the *Upaniṣads* are referred as the *Vedānta*, ’end of Veda’, and it has become the most influential school of theology, and the philosophical paradigm of Hinduism *par excellence* (Flood 1996, 238). There is also a large body of Sanskrit literature that is regarded of human authorship, regarded as secondary revelation, *smṛti*: Dharma literature comprises rules of conduct, Epics and mythological texts of *Purāṇas* are stories about people and gods. In addition, there are also texts in vernacular languages, which can be seen of equal importance. (Flood 1996, 11). The textual traditions reflect their context, and Hinduism can be broadly subsumed under three headings, which feed into also contemporary Hinduism: the traditions of brahmanical

orthopraxy, the renouncer traditions, and popular or local traditions. The brahmanical traditions have played the role of 'master narrative'. (Flood 1996, 16.)

In Indian ethnosociology, the problem of religious stratification between popular religions and "Sanskritic" Hinduism has been under discussion since 1950's. Concepts of "great and little tradition" by Redfield (1955) as two distinctive but interrelated cultural traditions of the first as formal, written, literate and reflected by few, while the second as informal, oral, illiterate and unreflected by many, were taken up by for example Dumont and Pollock, if Pollock later rejected it in favor of a dichotomy between the textual and the popular (Parry 1985, 202-203). Srinivas came up with idea of "Sanskritic Hinduism and non-Sanskritic Hinduism" coupled with "Sanskritization", a process by which the beliefs and practices of lower castes tend to converge toward those of higher castes in the attempt of the latter to raise their status (Fuller 1992, 24–25). However, according to Fuller (1992, 26) all competent anthropological studies on Hinduism for the past 30 years have come to the same conclusion that religion cannot be divided into two or more separate, higher and lower strata.

> The Brahmanical standard of Sanskritic Hinduism is neither monolithic nor unchallenged by alternatives. Nonetheless, it represents the single most important evaluative norm within hinduism. By reference to it, higher-status groups tend to regard their own beliefs and practices as superior to those assumed to belong to lower-status groups. (Fuller 1992, 27).

Nevertheless, Parry (1985) argues, based on his fieldwork in Varanasi, that an extremely wide segment of population acknowledges a fundamental disctinction into scriptural, *shastrik*, and popular*, laukik*.

> Belief and practice are visualized as a composite of both. The *shastrik* elements are *pramanik* ('proven'), eternally valid and binding on all Hindus, and in their interpretation the Brahman is pre-eminent. By contrast, the *laukik* is ephemeral, a mere matter of local usage to be discarded if it offends against contemporary canons of good sense, and here it is often the women who are regarded as the repositories of tradition. Admittedly this *shastrik/laukik* division is itself derived from the *shastrik* domain; but the fact remains that it internalized by many illiterate Hindus who clearly represent their religious universe as composed of elements taken from two conceptually separable traditions. Debate on theological issues, or on correct ritual practice, always starts from this distinction. If it can be established that a particular item is shastrik, then there's an end of the matter, it is unquestionably authoritative. (Parry 1985, 204).

Interestingly while everybody agrees on the distinction, there is no general consensus on the contents of the categories. Nevertheless, Parry stresses: "the textual tradition is here accorded an ideological immunity to sceptical scrutiny, while the oral tradition is the focus of continual critical evaluation" (Parry 1985, 205). Yet, Parry also reminds that Brahman culture is very much an oral culture and the desire to verbally make others speechless was the ethos of Benarasi Brahman. There is also a form of institutionalized verbal battle about the interpretation of the texts, *shastrarth.* (Parry 1985, 207). It could be said that performing knowledge is an art. Also learning, memorizing and learning

how to pronounce the scriptures scriptures is an art, connected to the oral traditions (Fuller 2001). It is important to note, that in ascetic yoga traditions, in which the knowledge is more importantly passed on in the teacher–student lineage, scriptural knowledge does not play such a role (Bevilacqua 2017).

Interestingly, then, on the one hand, there is great emphasis on precise, exact reproduction of the texts and performance of sounds, as the power and meaning could have the opposite effect if performed incorrectly. The words are powerful once vocalized, performed. On the other hand, Parry (1985, 213) notes that, “the canon of sacred literature is by no means closed.” Returning to *Vedas*, which are seen as the source of *dharma*, religious duty and morality, these ritual texts do not give direct rules of conduct, rather, according to Parry (1985, 211) ”their lack of any real bearing on the practical world is essential to their inviolability. Since they are not bound to the social world they are immune to the corrosive effects of the changes it undergoes .” As ultimate authority on matters they do no pronounce, the transcendental knowledge requires a sage or *guru,* whose credentials are judged in terms of this knowledge of the scriptural revelation. (Parry (1985, 211) The necessity and authority of *guru* will be discussed in next section.

However, as counterpoise, it is also worthwhile to mention here Narayanam’s (2000) critique of scholarly depictions of Hinduism that overemphasize doctrines and texts and thereby ignore what really matters to people. Narayanan (2000, 762) notes: ”early western Indologist and scholars of religion relied on male brahmins for their understanding of tradition.” She confronts the restricted ”textbook” portrayals on Hinduism by saying that: ”Hindus do not usually walk around worrying about their *karma* or working toward *moksha* (liberation), nor are most folk familiar with anything more than the name Vedānta among the various schools of philosophy” (Narayanan 2000, 762). Broo (2003, 71) similarly observes: ”a problem with using extensive written primary material, especially when it originates in the elite of a particular society, is that it may say more about the ideals of the elite than about empirical reality.” However, he acknowledges that it is often the only material scholars have, as when describing the medieval situation.

Narayanam (2000, 763) makes rather relevant point, at least in my view, how the lack of diversity of traditions in the portrayals has caused that ”many Hindus who read these portrayals of Hinduism may not recognize themselves in them”. Earlier I also addressed my own interest in popular traditions of yoga practice. Similar to this

emphasis, Narayanan explains that her understanding of Hindu stories emerged as she listened to family members performed them. She underscores that in the Hindu tradition drama, dance, and music have been seen to be vehicle of religious expression, as classical music and dance were considered to be given by gods and goddesses to humans. She argues that "the performing arts, therefore, provide an alternative avenue to salvation, paralleling the way of knowledge and meditation seen in post-Vedic literature" (Narayanan 2000, 775). According to her, religion is conveyed and transmitted through narrative and performance, both onstage and through mass media all over India. By depicting traditional stories and using the Hindu mythic structures, dancers are using the traditional art form to communicate about social problems: "a traditional form of communication is used to raise consciousness". (Narayanan 2000, 775-776). In parallel, I argue that, instead of dismissing the variety of traditional communication forms, scholars should observe how and to what end are they utilized with even greater care and attention.

3.2.2 Authority of the *guru*

In general it can be said that basically all of the authors and sources used in this work recognize that having a teacher, *guru*, is essential to spiritual development in traditional Indian thought. Indeed, Mlecko's (1982) analysis of the *guru* institution corresponds well with the ideas on *guru* that I encountered on the field. Mlecko (1982, 33) argues: "it is a universal insistence that instruction by an adept teacher is necessary for development in the spiritual life. This insistence is especially vivid with regard to the guru in the traditions of Hinduism." *Guru* plays an important role in the transmission and development of the Hindu religious tradition, whether in passing on knowledge to being himself a locus for worship. Religion is manifested or embodied in the continuing, successive presence of the guru. *Guru* reveals the meaning of life; he is the incarnate exemplar of life and an inspirational source for the Hindu. (Mlecko 1982, 33.) According to Mlecko (1982,33) guruhood is the oldest form of still extant religious education, therefore, understanding it is paramount in any consideration of the Hindu traditions.

Gurus are not restricted only to spiritual development. '*Gu*' means 'ignorance' and '*ru*' 'dispeller': *guru* is a dispeller of any kind ignorance. As a term *guru* means also 'heavy' or 'weighty' pointing to the special knowledge and prestige and power associated with it. *Guru* possesses both experiental and intellectual knowledge. *Guru* can be many things and there is no exact counterpart in Western culture. Integrated into

one personality *guru* is a teacher, father-image, mature ideal, hero, source of strength, counselor, even divinity. Traditionally, *guru* is a personal teacher of spirituality, of the basic, ultimate values of Hindu tradition. The earliest *gurus* were teachers of the *Vedas*, including the various accompanying skills (grammar, metrics, etymology, mnemonics). Teaching took place in dialogue format and knowledge was orally transmitted, books were rarely used. Proper accent and pronunciation is of great importance in the Vedic recitation and can be taught only from an expert, properly qualified teacher. The interpersonal dimension was regarded highly. (Mlecko 1982, 33-34.)

The *guru* usually was a *Brāhman* (the highest caste) and students were a select group from *Brāhman, Kṣatriya* and *Vaiśya (*the spiritually twice-born castes by a ritual) families. Ideally the students lived within the *gurukula*, the extended family of the *guru,* and, thus, the *guru* could intimately and radically influence and mold the life of the student, *śiṣya.* Association and imitation were regarded as highly important in the learning process. (Mlecko 1982, 33-34.) It is quite noteworthy, that the responsibility of development is ultimately on the *śiṣya* and not the *guru.* In the dialectic teaching the student asked questions and the teacher discoursed upon them, and additionally the student was expected to contemplate on the truth and activate it in his life. Self-discipline was expected (Mlecko 1982, 38.)

In the *Vedas* there are scattered references to guru, but in the *Upaniṣads* the *guru* is already portrayed as a necessary steward of spiritual learning and development. The word, *Upaniṣads*, means literally ”sitting down opposite to somebody”, and thus models how one should study. Conversely, study without a *guru* is repeatedly disapproved in the work; it is even considered futile. Education was a means of attaining sacred knowledge of the Ultimate Reality, which even gods and demons learned from a *guru*. Relation of *guru* and divinity is also presented in *Upaniṣads.* In *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣads* (c. 4th century BCE) *guru* is identified with *Brahman*, God, as he was considered to have reached emancipation. As a result, *śiṣya* treated *guru* with same devotion, *bhakti,* as God. (Mlecko 1982, 37.) Mlecko (1982, 37) describes the relationship of *guru* and *śiṣya* as of spiritual reciprocity: ”(t)he guru provided guidance and knowledge on the spiritual path and the *śiṣya* reciprocated with obedience and devotion”. In *Upaniṣads* it is also mentioned that even teachers should become disciples to the adept when they seek Truth on other Paths than their own. *Guru* shows the path, and by being near to the *guru*, humbly serving and obeying him, *śiṣya* is to know and experience the “way”. (Mlecko 1982, 37.)

The idea that *guru* should not take money traces back to *Manu Śāstra,* which describes two types of teachers: *upādhyāya* teaches only a portion of the *Veda* and for livelihood, whereas *ācārya* teaches *Veda* with its *Kalpasutras* (concerning sacrifices) and the *Upaniṣads*, and teaches for free. He could only be given donations. In *Manu ācārya* is described to be ten times more venerable than *upādhyāya.* (Mlecko 1982, 38-39.) It should be noted that it is still quite common in India to describe the pricing of services as 'donations'. Mlecko (1982) gives many examples of other references in the scriptures but for the purpose of this work I will go over only some main points. In regards the esoteric teachings of Tantra, Mlecko (1982, 44-45) explains *guru* was necessary to teach the complex and secret practices, and he could teach only if he had mastered the path as a living liberated person, *jīvanmukta*. Mlecko (1982, 45) highlights: "religious authority was significantly shifting from orthodox *Brāhmans* who knew the *Vedas* to the guru whose devotion and knowledge of *Tantra* led him to liberation. Intellectual knowledge or hereditary status alone were not of prime importance." Tantra traditions were not caste bound.

Thus in the *Bhakti* traditions a new kind of a teacher is introduced, replacing the old *Vedic* teacher whose authority was based on his academic knowledge. *Guru* becomes revered for his individual, inspirational qualities that are rooted on his own personal devotion. (Mlecko 1982, 46) In the major *bhakti* sects, *Vaiṣṇavite* and *Śaivite*, deification and worship of *guru* gained importance (Mlecko 1982, 50). In modern times Rāmakrishna (1836-1886) and his followers have brought positive attention to the *guru* both in India and also in the West. His student Vivekānanda (1863-1902), and his endeavors of building the Vedānta societies in the West, introduced a development that continues to this day: foreign disciples were accepted without the necessity of their integration into the Hindu social community. (Mlecko 1982, 52-53.) Lastly, as Mlecko (1982, 55) quite realistically expounds: "*Gurus* can be completely selfless, desiring nothing for themselves or they can be avaricious, seeking only an easy livelihood off the naive or guilt-ridden-they use the *śiṣya*. On the other hand, the *śiṣya* can also use the *guru* for reasons other than spiritual development." For example, an individual might seek freedom from external societal restrains, and *guru* with his disciples often provide an alternative social hierarchy outside inherited social limits of caste and class. Guruhood continues to grow, adjust and influence. (Mlecko 1982, 56.)

4 RETHEORIZING YOGA: FROM TRADITION TO KNOWLEDGE

There is a vast literature on yoga but exceedingly little of it has examined yoga ethnographically in India. Before my fieldwork, yoga had been researched mainly by indologists and historians of religions, and the studies at hand used textual sources and seemed to concentrate in analyzing the philosophical concepts or attempts of codifying the traditions. Not to undermine the importance of Indologist this thesis, however, seeks to understand yoga not as an abstract practice but as a living one. I therefore turn to Michael Lambek's theory of religion as lived system of practical knowledge in order to develop a framework to examine yoga ethnographically. I then turn to theorize knowledge transmission in the yoga contexts. Toward this end, I review literature on hierarchy, ritual, and performance in order to conceptualize the yoga class as a particular kind of knowledge performance.

I see many interesting parallels between my field material and Michael Lambek's discussion of religion, sorcery and healing in Mayotte, especially his discussion of Islam. Lambek explores the traditions of Islam, cosmology and spirit possession as distinct, systematic bodies of knowledge that are available to the people of Mayotte (1993, 1997). Roughly speaking, Islam is associated with the elite, cosmology with the ”original” inhabitants of the island and the spirit possession with various ethnic groups. However, Lambek shows how practitioners were not necessarily associated with particular social origin; that is, traditions were also permeable, complementary and overlapping (Lambek 1993, 52–53). Together, however, the three traditions formed a local repertoire of knowledge systems that was distinct from the Western or European equivalent (ibid, 53). Lambek's approach to religious knowledge thus emphasizes, ”the ways in which knowledge is acquired, legitimated, and applied; the contrast between the ways these processes operate in each stream; the relationship between the theory and practice in each; and the ways in which the practitioners of each interpret the others” (1993; 1997, 133).

While in Bangalore, my research focused on the reproduction, circulation, legitimation and application of the yogic tradition. My interest in the relationship of yoga theory and practice stemmed directly from this research focus. Although I cannot address all of the questions that Lambek posed in his work, I argue that his approach offers a useful framework through which to understand the different disciplines of yoga. On the one hand, different forms of yoga practice can be understood as distinct streams

of knowledge, akin to the different religious traditions that Lambek delineates. In this regard, my data is drawn from two distinguished schools of yoga, Iyengar Yoga and yoga of s-VYASA. Yet, on the other hand, just as Lambek argues that the religious traditions of Mayotte form a collective repertoire, so too can we see different yoga streams as constituting a larger repertoire of yogic practice. As the saying goes, ”all yoga is yoga”.

4.1 Knowledge as an analytic category

What is peculiar about yoga is that its definition spans both the aim, that is, the state to be attained, and the technique, that is, the path to attain it. How these two aspects of yoga have been understood and structured has varied greatly across time and place, and different traditions have different logic how to reach the goal, while the goal might be depicted in different ways. In popular language yoga is often explained to be union of body and mind or, for example, individual soul, *jivātma,* and supreme, cosmic soul, *paramātma,* or as in Vedanta of true self, *Ātman,* and eternal absolute, *Brahman,*. But in so called classical yoga it can also be explained as the isolation of eternal self, cosmic consciousness, *puruṣa,* and manifested form, nature, *prakṛti*. In popular discourse these conceptions are happily intermingled, and bits and pieces of different layers of traditions are utilized together (see for example Liberman 2008), without necessarily seeing any problems in the matter, although it does surely create confusion at times. However, any deeper look into any specific tradition reveals their differences and further study would reveal their distinct, inherent logic. My first plan was to compare the two disciplines of Iyengar Yoga and Yoga of s-VYASA as genres of practice but I came to realize it is beyond the scope of this work. However, in future to emphasize the knowledge base each yoga tradition has, it is worthwhile to follow Lambek and speak of disciplines, that is, of repertoires of knowledge.

Lambek (1993, 12, 32) was not interested in reifying idealized traditions, nor in the policing the boundaries between religion or ethnomedicine. In consequence, he speaks of ’disciplines’ instead of ’traditions’, and it was his emphasis on knowledge that put my thinking on a new trail, to look at knowledge over ’tradition’. Also, like Lambek (1993; 1997, 132) I am much more interested in ’lived practices’ than doing for example a pure textual analysis of yogic knowledge or taking the ”textbook” narrative as the full story. My effort to understand yoga as a discipline, as a form of knowledge practice, draws on the scholarship. Moreover, treating yoga as a lived knowledge practice also

allows us analyze the discipline as a 'text' in the anthropological sense (cf. Lambek 1993, 136) since the practice is informed by abstract systems of knowledge but inevitably manifests them in different forms.

Lambek (1993, 4; 1997,131) takes 'knowledge' as an analytical category over belief, and pushes further Evans-Pritchard's[13] insight that ideas can only be fully understood in their context of use. He states further: "this turns away the argument away from questions of rationality and subjectivity in the abstract toward seeing the force of knowledge in its social, political, intellectual, moral and practical contexts." (1997, 131-132). As yoga philosophy contains a lot of esoteric and metaphysical knowledge, the temptation to evaluate its rationality exists, which as a result can lead into discarding its validity as a system of knowledge in its own right.

Lambek (1993, 4) reminds us that "conceptions of knowledge lie at the heart of any system of thought" and as man learns the names of things, interpreting reality by means of previously existing symbols: in this sense, knowledge exists prior to individual human consciousness, and also "in a real sense, independent of the experience of the knowers". In the case of yoga, the idea of pre-existing knowledge is essential, and all problems of our existence are a result of ignorance, *avidya*, or illusion, *maya*. Also the revelationary scriptures, *Vedas,* present the eternal truth in Hinduism, and for yoga too the authority is on scriptures of yoga. The idea of yogic scriptures holding the truth manifested for example during a scientific lecture in an international conference of the deemed Yoga University, when the lecturer referred to the scriptures instead of for example presenting science based proof for his claims. On the other hand, as one internationally established teacher explains the process of yoga, the practice can lead one individually to same results or realizations as another person, which points to an idea of pre-existing knowledge to be discovered from within, framed by the knowledge of the discipline of course. Right knowledge, *vidya,* is a central concept in yoga philosophy and Hinduism. Lambek's notion of religion as a living system of knowledge is thus quite apt for thinking out how practioners themselves orient to and understand yoga.

Indeed, Lambek's conception of religion as a living system of knowledge sheds light on yogic understandings that place knowledge as both outside the practioner but also as embodied within practioners. Lambek (1993, 4) states of the Mayotte case:

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[13] Lambek refers to the fascinating, classic work *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (1937), which I unfortunately did not re-read for this work)

”’knowledge’ rather than 'belief’ becomes the critical expression of the relationship of the adherent to the faith.” On one hand, ”knowledge has external, objective substance; it can be looked up, grasped, accumulated, manipulated, and made practical use of by the individual” (1993, 4). On the other hand, ”knowledge is not merely an objective substance to be manipulated, but something that comes to be embodied, an intrinsic part of the self. Knowledge has an indexical, personal function; what one knows is not fully distinguishable from what one does or who one is” (1993, 5-6). And, in Mayotte, acquisition of knowledge is ”central to becoming a respectable citizen, and in practice acquisition means the ability to recite sacred texts, so that ’having’ knowledge is very closely linked to ’performing’ it.” (1997, 132).

Similarly, in Hinduism, practice takes precedence over belief, orthopraxy over orthodoxy: behavior, expressing Hindu values and power structures, performing ritual practices and adhering to rules makes a person a Hindu (Flood 1996, 12). However, as explained elsewhere there is contrast between popular and textual religion, and learning the scriptures, *shastras*, is reserved only to the higher strata of the society, the so called twice-born (Parry 1985). The value place on orthopraxy of course can result in the need and desire to demonstrate, to ’perform,’ knowledge, a phenomenon which Lambek also examines. This circumstance may explain some random encounters that I experienced on the streets of Bangalore when a person starting to quote *Yoga sūtras* out of the blue and to explain to me “what yoga is about.” This happening seemed more like a demonstration of what the speaker knew than as a way of sharing knowledge in order to help my project. Another way in which yogic knowledge is ’performed’ occurs in the actual practice of yoga, which I will discuss later. The key is that,” knowledge must be meaningful. It is both externalized and internalized by individuals and provides reasonably coherent and satisfying models of and for social action and the world in which action is situated” (Lambek 1993, 10).

Lambek (1997, 132) stresses that knowledge is resolutely social and it has social consequences: ”knowledge provides a main vehicle for both social action and social differentiation.” For example, in Mayotte, knowledge expressed in words and practices can be seen as material that carry material effects: ”they raise and lower status, prestige, and esteem; they help constitute identity and relationships and engender particular responses in the self and others; they bring greater autonomy and greater constraint.” (Lambek 1997, 133-134). An informant told me a telling proverb from Tamil Nadu: ”An evil man will get respect on the street, a king will get respect in his kingdom but a

learned man will get respect everywhere he goes.” In India knowledge is prestige, and it does not always belong to everyone, as my informant revealed. In fact, Lambek goes so far to suggest treating knowledge as material factor analogous to land, money kinship connections, in its potential effects; and if ”the ’ideal’ is treated as material, at the same time, the ’material’ can only be understood via the ideal” (1997, 134). But, as an analytic tool, to Lambek, the concept of knowledge enables to bridge distinctions between ideal and material, subjective and objective approaches (1993, 10).

The same logic applies to yoga knowledge. Patañjali’s *Yogaūtra* lays out moral principles: five moral observances (*Yama*: *ahiṁsā/* nonviolence, *satya/* truthfulness, *asteya/* non-stealing, *brahmacarya*/ chastity, *aparigrahāḥ/* greedlessness) and five restraints (*niyama*: *śauca*/ purity, *santoṣa*/ contentment, *tapaḥ*/ asceticism, *svādhyāya*/ study, *Īśvara praṇidhānāni*/ devotion) as the first of the eight steps or branches of yoga path. In his analysis of the rhetoric of *shivir,* that is, public, mass events to promote yoga, Alter (2008) notes how Patañjali’s *Yogaūtra* and the *Bhagavadgīta* are often used in lectures as point of reference:

> for the articulation of a broad range of issues that have a bearing on the development of character, civic-minded public service, work ethics, and what might generally be regarded as ”life” skills. In most basic terms, the logic that is employed is that practice of yoga involves self-discipline and mental control (Alter 2008, 44).

Even if the practice in these mass events is to practice a simple routine of *āsanas* and *prānāyāma*, in a mass-drill format, it was stressed how yoga can bring about positive sociomoral reform. Alter also notes how the practice format produces a sense of community with a common purpose, which might explain why *shivir* are so popular (Alter 2998, 45-46). Although I will not be discussing the morale teachings of yoga in much detail, such embodied knowledge is very much part of becoming a ”respectable” yoga practitioner. It is not rare to use the yoga knowledge to guide or even reprimand someone, be it subtle or frank. Thus, yoga knowledge can seen be as social capital in itself and also in the moral sense. On the other hand, the traditional view is that one’s knowledge should not be sold and many informants criticized that commercial approach in yoga destroys spirituality.

Lambek (1993, 17) points out, that ”if we want to discover what an expert knows, it is insufficient to simply ask her; instead, we have to observe, recount, and talk with her about what she does.” In the field I was not only interested in the expert narratives but I also wanted to know how the regular students understand their practice. In yoga, of course, the question of internalizing knowledge is of great importance: how to become a real ’yogi’. As I mentioned before, just doing the *āsanas* does not make one

a *yogi.* In the personal, or individual narratives, which I present later on, what the regular students are best able to narrate is how the practice works on them, what are the effects of the practice. This is the first narrative of yoga, whether they have explicated it or not, is what yoga has given.

Also important for this study is Lambek's point that the social distribution of knowledge is linked to the political economy of knowledge. As Lambek writes:

> Knowledge is not distributed equally, nor is it pursued with equal interest by all. There are two complementary and interdependent ways to look at this. The first is a kind of political economy of knowledge, examining the unequal distribution of knowledge as a function of the constraints on its production and dissemination. From this point of view it is useful to shift our vocabulary from the previous chapter. Instead of distinguishing among cultural 'traditions' we will speak of 'disciplines.' It is these disciplines that constitute 'structure' the dialectical partner of 'practice' in my analysis. Each discipline produces its own specialists, entails its own constraints on reproduction, dissemination, and practical use, and has its own forms of legitimation and pattern of distribution within the community. The acquisition of serious knowledge in any given discipline, while in theory available to everyone, is a lengthy, arduous, and frequently painful task. Hence the distribution and circulation of knowledge are in part products of the way in which learning is socially organized. The second perspective begins with practice. In a classic formulation of the sociology of knowledge, Schutz (1964) distinguishes the 'man on the street' from the 'well-informed citizen' and the 'expert.' (Lambek 1993, 68-69).

I will return to this theme of hierarchy of knowledge later.

The unequal distribution of knowledge can, however, result in abuse. Lambek explores this through local understandings of socery in Mayotte (1997, 135). In regard to yoga, current-day critics decry, for example, yoga's reductionist applications (e.g., as mere exercise) and what I understand as decontextualization and entextualization in ways that are not always regarded being aligned with older yoga traditions. But there is also another interesting parallel to the history of yoga: resistance to hegemonies. As Lamber argues for the Mayotte case:

> Sorcery is conceptualized in Mayotte as an illegitimate yet essentially text-driven practice, whereas its extraction depends on access to knowledge by explicitly nontextual means. If textual practices are dominant in Mayotte, sorcery and its removal might be analysed, in part, as counterhegemonic forms of in/subordinate discourse, resisting textual knowledge and technical control at the level of bodily practice (Lambek 1993, 18-19)

Similarly, in regard to yoga, the tantric traditions are often said to have developed as resistance to the Brahmanical tradition. According to Flood (2006, 8) "the diverse tantric revelation must be seen in contrast to the ancient, orthodox Brahmanical revelation of the Veda". He (2006, 10) continues: "the tantric tradition of power defined themselves against the Vedic tradition of purity and saw their power as lying in the transgression of Vedic social norms". Flood (2006, 26) portrays it in difference of somatic experience and monastic diclipline and philosophy: "shamanic practitioner might be seen in the *tāntrika* cremation ground ascetic seeking ecstatic experience through yogic techniques, ecstatic sexuality and intoxicating substances in contrast to the tantric Brahman temple priest or practitioner still within the sphere of orthoprax

injunction". Although tantric traditions are also an essential part of Hinduism and yoga, their reputation has sometimes fallen into the category "everything that is wrong with hinduism".

> Writing at the end of the nineteenth century, the eminent Indologist Monier Monier-Williams was able to say that the Tantras are 'mere manuals of mystics, magic and superstition of the worst and most silly kind' And that with these text and their traditions ' we are confronted with the worst results of the worst superstitious ideas that have ever disgraced and degraded the human race. (Flood, 2006, 3 ref. Monier-Williams 1880, 129)

Scholarship on tantric traditions has made remarkable progress during the past 30 year and it has also been crucial for better understanding of history of yoga (Mallison and Singleton 2017, xxiv), but unfortunately further exploration would take us too far away from the core of this work. However, I will return to the main argument of Flood (2006) on the Tantric body as a text. The medieval *haṭha yoga* developed from the tantric traditions. It is also noteworthy that since the turn of the century the advocates of yoga, or postural yoga as Alter (2008, 36) writes, "sought to consciously dissociate embodied forms of practice form the magical, mystical, and sexual alchemy of *haṭha yoga".* And here again one can see the productivity of a Lambekian approach that emphasizes repertoires of practical knowledge that both depend on but repeatedly blur boundaries.

4.1.1 Knowledge: objectified and embodied

While in the field, the relationship between the theory and practice of yoga often seemed paradoxical: the theory presented in the scriptures was regarded as the authority and it describes a metaphysical truth, whereas the practitioner narratives revealed many questions to what extent are the teachings of yoga performed, as the teachings constitute also a worldview and morale guideline for living. Thus, the realm of yoga philosophy and the social reality of people taking yoga classes to get fit seemed at times to be quite far apart. I was striving to understand how they are connected. I will present examples of this in the next chapter. On the other hand, several informants did ask me whether I was trying to understand yoga intellectually or to really learn yoga, as it should be experienced. One informant, in particular, detested the scientific study of yoga because, according to him, science can never explain the experience of yoga, nor how yoga works. Similarly, another informant explained that the physiological results of yoga might be measured, but that the state of yoga was nonetheless beyond words. All informants with whom I had proper conversations agreed that one cannot learn yoga by only reading books, you have to practice it. In Lambek's words, what is interesting is: "the local interplay of practice and theory" (1997, 142-3).

One possibility for analyzing the theoretical and practical knowledge in yoga is to look into the categories of objectified and embodied knowledge. Lambek (1993; 1997, 136) drew on this distinction in order to contrast religious disciplines in Mayotte, such as Islam and cosmology, which rely heavily on texts, and disciplines such as spirit possession, which relies on experience in practice. He says ”the contrast is useful one in exploring the distinctive political economies of knowledge and the ways authority, legitimacy and truth is established” (1997, 136). While my approach here is somewhat different in that I am not analyzing separate disciplines, I nevertheless suggest that within the larger frame of yoga the theoretical and the practical aspects could be regarded as objectified and embodied knowledge. Thus, I am comparing Lambek's views on Islamic objectified knowledge to that of yoga theory. Thus, where Lambek writes, “Islam provided a coherent world view and a means of organizing social institutions that claimed to represent the interests of the entire society and that were embraced, more or less closely, by all strata. (Lambek 1993,53),”one could similarly argue that yoga theory grounds an integrated worldview. In contrast, Lambek defines the concept of embodiment as referring: ”to the ways things are taken in, substantiated, or informed by the body rather than to a raw preobjective experience that is somehow autonomous or prior.” (Lambek 1997, 136–137).

Initially Lambek observed the disciplines through the objectified and embodied categories more exclusively, but soon came to realize their dialectics (1993, 307). Knowledge acquisition, learning, and performing (for example, recitation) engages the body: Islamic knowledge exists not only in written texts but also in bodily practices of individuals. ”To 'know' Islam is to practice it. To 'read' a text is to perform it”. (Lambek 1993, 151-152). ”Islamic knowledge is embodied in speech acts, ritual performances, and narrative.” (Lambek 1993, 178). Additionally, texts can be looked up to be *applied*, instead of recitation, used for bodily processes, as is the case of the cosmological discipline (Lambek 1997, 137.)

> Islamic knowledge exists in objectified form, encoded in texts that are theoretically accessible to anyone and that can be exchanged, circulated, reproduced, and interpreted (if not analysed or criticized) in a public fashion. Yet as we have seen, it is also embodied through comportment and, in particular, through the fact that the central texts are memorized and recited or sung, hence performed.
> Embodiment and objectification are interdependent, each partial and unrealized without the other. Embodiment provides the ultimate ground for legitimating objective knowledge, rendering it experientially real and confirming its presence in and for the bearer or recipient. Objectification makes embodied knowledge graspable by others, loosening its attachment to the immediate crucible of its production and reinserting it in the public domain. An understanding of this dialectic is critical for relating knowledge to questions of authority, legitimation, accountability, and power. (Lambek 1993, 307)

In short, Lambek comes to the conclusion that the textual disciplines have significant embodied dimensions, much as what he regarded as embodied discipline requires a certain objectification of its categories and rules of procedure in ways reminiscent of texts. He then suggests that we have to analyze the specific dialectic between embodiment and objectification, the textualizing qualities of embodied knowledge based discipline and the embodying properties of the objectified knowledge. (Lambek 1997, 136). It is crucial for understanding authority, he says.

Likewise Flood (2006, 4) in his study of the tantric body observes similar kind of relationship between the technologies, methods or techniques of the body, developed within tantric traditions to transform body and self and the representations of the body in philosophy, in ritual and in art. He observes that representations are performative, used 'in life transforming practices', and conversely, techniques of the body themselves entail representations of it: both representations and technique come together in divination of the body, which in his analysis is the hallmark of tantric culture. "The text is expressed as body and the body articulated in the text" (Flood 2006, 4). His argument contains three interrelated views. Firstly, tantric body becomes inscribed by text and is entextualized, to which I will return in a following sub-chapter. Secondly, the body functions as the root metaphor or topos of the tantric traditions and operates at different levels of practice and discourse. "The body is the vehicle for imagining and conceptualizing tradition and cosmos." Thirdly, the ideal subjectivity is tradition-specific, and the tantric practitioner identifies himself with a model that exists outside of himself that he then strives to become through daily ritual and yogic practice. (Flood 2006, 4-5). In the exhilarating Sufi performances also, the embodiment of universal knowledge is the dissolution, the disembodiment of the autonomous self; likewise to speak God's language is to make God manifest (Lambek 1993, 155).

Thus, the embodiment of the objectified knowledge does not only take place, I would argue, it can be the aim and the purpose. Instead of embodied knowledge Flood (2006, 6, 27) refers to 'corporeal understanding': the merging of symbolic representation and lived, experienced body is a corporeal understanding of text. His argument is that tantric body can only be understood in terms of text and tradition and "in its medieval Indian context the tantric body is not a given that is discovered but a process that is contracted through dedicated effort over years of practice" (Flood 2006, 6). Here it is to be noted the acquisition of knowledge is a continuous process, as also Lambek repeatedly notes. On the other hand, Bevilacqua's (2017) study based on field

> indicates that for most contemporary ascetics, texts are not part of their practice, nor a reference for experience. In Kamakhya, a Nath explained succinctly that: ‘these works [written texts] are for *samsdrik* (lay people), for those people who cannot practice yoga constantly. Otherwise you need just to have your *äsana— siddhäsana padmäsana*—and hours to do your activities’. (Bevilacqua, 2017, 191.)

Siikala and Siikala (2005) provide yet another perspective on the matter discussing tradition in Cook Islands. In Polynesian culture also, the mastery as well as the transmission of tradition are both equally institutionalized. In addition to oral traditions, music, songs, dance and entertainment genres are also taught, practiced and performed in specialized institutions. The activity of these masters can be best described, state the Siikalas, as being the creative implementations of the knowledge passed down by a specialist through special skills in the performative genres. The relationship between the repositories of knowledge is a complex one, but there is certain division of cultural labour and tasks do not often overlap. In the phenomena of specialization, the Siikalas observe an example of a distinction between subject and subject matter, performance and the content of the performance, between speech and what is spoken about. They detect that even the most skilled dancer is very seldom able to tell the story or the dance one performs: they know the story, but they do not tell it. Upon insisting they refer you to the specialist. (Siikala and Siikala 2005, 52-56). I surely can relate to that!

Lambek (1993, 138) also observed that ”Qur'anic education provides the means to recite texts, that is, to sound them out and repeat them, but the meaning must be acquired separately, well after recitation has been mastered” and only a few reach this level). Somewhat similarly, Siikala and Siikala (2005, 55) explicate: ”in the case of a dance performance, the question is not only a retelling of a narrative in a different art form, but a transposing of the contents of a narrative from a linguistic to an equally formalized bodily register.” Thus, the Siikalas argue, the local dancing, composed of thematically defined and formalized movements constitute an alternative to the linguistic form as a knowledge repository. These bodily practices are internalized through months of drill like practice. (Siikala and Siikala 2005, 55-56). The formalized bodily register, therefore, acts as a legitimate repository of knowledge that one is intensely trained into.

Zarilli (1984) has studied traditional martial art of *kaḷarippayattu* in India and in his report about the in-body transmission of knowledge, and how it is learned, he detects that the practice is taken from the level of ’trying’ to ’doing’. ”The exercises

slowly become more and more a part of the physical knowledge of the student who patiently pursues the art. Through lengthy practice the external form becomes second nature" (Zarilli 1984, 199). Then "doing the exercise", involving a "here and now" actuality, means that the performer and the exercise or act are one. (Zarilli 1984, 191). This could be also called as internalization of "performance knowledge", which Zarilli (ibid) explains in following way: "'Performance knowledge" is the result of learning the codified strips of behavior and having them ready at hand for use in either structured or improvised performance". Both in martial arts and theatrical arts in Asia the "strip of codified behavior" is passed on by master teachers, and also the improvisation is within the frame of prescribed traditions: "if they improvise, they do so within such a restricted field of choice and with such a précised vocabulary of techniques that the parameters of the actions are strictly prescribed" (Zarilli 1984, 191).

Lambek refers also to the Aristotelian distinction of ethical know-how, *phronesis*, and technical know-how, *techne* (1993, 179; 1997, 138-139). He is making a distinction of knowing *how*, that is embodied knowledge, to knowing *that*, meaning objectified knowledge, or *phronesis* described as a knowing *as*. I would argue that in yoga that knowledge of yoga is built up in stages, starting with the 'technical know-how' and then later, perhaps, moving deeper to the other levels, including 'ethical know-how'. Although the reductionist view and approach to yoga, of for example just fitness and health, is criticized, it is also acknowledged that one has to start from somewhere. Learning is a slow process, even if "customers" expect fast results. One of the established, respected teachers that I interviewed commented that it takes years to understand even one's own leg.

Flood speaks directly of body techniques, the Siikalas refer to skills and Lambek (1997, 139) describes *techne* as 'technical know-how.' Quite clearly, then, these authors are indebted to Marcel Mauss (1973) and his seminal essay "Techniques of the body". For both learning yoga as a technique, or reaching the state of yoga, the core arguments of Mauss are insightful. As Mauss wrote:

> The body is man's first and most natural instrument. Or more accurately, not to speak of instruments, man's first and most natural technical object, and at the same time technical means, is his body. (Mauss 1973, 75)

Similarly, according to Flood (2006, 4, 25), the body is the precondition for experience and also the vehicle for conceptualization.

One side comment needs to be made here though. Kasulis (1993, xviii-xix) makes comparisons in between Western discussions on body to Asian traditions and

mentions few recurrent themes. Most Asian traditions developed their somatic theories in conjunction with some particular practice: spiritual, medical, artistic, which suggests they were designed as explanations of praxes and how they function. Also, quite important in yoga, he remarks the importance of training for body-mind integration, which is worthwhile in dual sense for us, learning and practicality of the question:

> The striking difference from most Western discussions of the mind-body relation is that the emphasis is on developing the integration between the two rather than looking for a constant, unchanging form of interrelationship. In this regard, many Asian philosophers (as might many Western physicians) see the disconnection of mind from body not as a philosophical problem but as a practical dysfunction. The unity of mind and body is not to be discovered but achieved. (Kasulis 1993, xviii)

He also notes, that in general Asian traditions were more closely related to issues concerning practical wisdom, *phronesis,* than epistemic knowledge. Lastly, there is:

> the prominence of a third entity that is neither mind nor body, but somehow the root of both. In the East Asian theories, this entity was often expressed in terms of *ch'i* or *ki*. […] Indian terms like *ātman* or *purusha* refer to personal aspects totally beyond mind-body categories. Besides being constituent of personal existence, these third entities also put the individual into a continuum with the external world. (Kasulis 1993, xix)

We should thus be attentive to the different ways that particular religious or epistemological traditions themselves conceptualize the body as a tool for knowledge production

Returning then to Mauss, (1973, 86-87), and his most interesting argument for this work, he was familiar with Sanskrit yoga texts and argued, ”precisely that at the bottom of all our mystical states there are techniques of the body which we have not studied”. Mauss (ibid) links also ”entering into ’communication with God’” to biological means, and Asad (1997, 48) takes his idea further: ”embodied practices (including language-in-use) form a precondition for varieties of religious experience. The inability to ’enter into communion with God’ becomes a function of untaught bodies.” Although for yoga it depends on the school of yoga whether communion with God is relevant at all, the original statement by Mauss places the emphasis on any mystical experience, and many schools of yoga aim at some sort of altered state of consciousness.

As yoga is specialized discipline, it is not all-pervasive and fundamentally life structuring like Hinduism or Islam in Hindu or Muslim society. In India yoga is partly of the Hindu system and partly not. Indeed, it is commonly argued that yoga is not tied to any religion or nation. Some of the objectified knowledge is shared with Hinduism at large, as it stems from Hindu traditions, even if it is shared by only some, and it can be said that yoga texts, the objectified knowledge of yoga is partly of the canonical

intertextual library of Hinduism. Instead, what could be regarded as the intertextuality of embodied knowledge specific to yoga in relation other Indian embodied disciplines could be more systematically explored. Using this expression of intertextual library, Siikala and Siikala (2005, 57) do not make such a distinction but they see it as a whole.

> These different inscriptions of tradition, these texts, relate themselves through the socially organized and institutionalized modes of their creation and realization into the lives of the people. As a whole, they form an intertextual library consisting of different ”behavioral genres” which are as much a mode of practice as models for it.…
>
> From the point of view of the analysis of tradition, the main consequence of this notion is that one cannot look at the individual texts in the context of their realisation in a speech even or other kind of performance only: the main context in which they have to be analyzed is within the totality of the contents of the library. (Siikala and Siikala 2005, 57.)

To conclude this section, it is my argument that theory and practice, objectified and embodied aspects of yoga knowledge should be studied together, as co-texts. However, we should also observe the stages of learning and being socialized into a discipline, and a certain hierarchy in holding and performing knowledge, as not everyone is an expert nor ever will be. Even if one begins with *techne,* techniques of the body, be it *āsanas* or meditation, one can reach practical wisdom and morality, *phronesis,* with dedicated study and practice. Although the word *yogi* is nowadays used also loosely to denote a practitioner of yoga, many informants made a clear distinction between people who go to yoga classes and a *yogi*, who lives in and by the tradition, that is, one who has internalized and who embodies the yogic wisdom fully. Now let’s look at the hierarchy of holding knowledge

4.2 Hierarchy of knowledge: acquisition and performing knowledge

Almost all scholars agree that in history of yoga the institutionalized transmission of knowledge has involved an initiatory structure through a master, *guru* (see for example Flood 2006, 63, 132-133). Thus, in case of specialized disciplines, like that of yoga, the effort and dedication to learn is even more crucial than for any mainstream disciplines that are embedded in the society as life ordering structures one is socialized into even without making a conscious choice. Here one again sees the relevance of Lambek’s notion that, in Mayotte, the acquisition of knowledge is central and ”’having’ knowledge is very closely linked to ’performing’ it.” (1997, 132): one needs knowledge in order to function in society (Lambek 1993, 133).

To take an example from a yoga tradition, the esoteric revelation of the tantras took place in a graded hierarchy, revealed through an initiatory structure and through a master (*guru*, *ācārya*) (Flood 2006, 63). Initiation presupposes the master. The master

of the tradition, called *ācārya, guru* or *deśika*, is crucial in the transference of power to the disciple and in teaching the rites and mantras. The master has knowledge of the god Śiva and of the traditions, and mediates between the practitioner and transcendent goal. This is not a comment on the inner awareness of the master; rather, the master is socially defined as having himself undergone a particular kind of consecration (the *ācāryābhiṣeka*) that itself indicates his degree of traditional knowledge and his ability to install icons, consecrate temples and perform initiations. It is less the intellectual and moral qualities of the mastery that are important (although these are desirable, along with no bodily impurities) and more the ability and authority (*adhikāra*) to perform the correct rites at the correct time; the ability to act as a channel for the transmission of tradition. This ability is a formal, socially acknowledged qualification that functions independently of the inner qualities of personality of the teacher. Indeed, during the rites of initiation the master becomes Śiva. It is Śiva who initiates the disciple through the master. The most important quality that the disciple, *śiṣya*, should possess is devotion to the master, *gurubhakti*, which is therefore devotion to Śiva. (Flood 2006, 132-133.)

In contemporary yoga, however, the situation is almost the opposite: basically everyone can attend any of the many yoga classes, public mass events or follow a program taught on TV, or buy a book. The techniques and teachings of yoga are no longer a secret, and when, during my fieldwork, I asked one *yogāchārya* about yoga's secretive past it felt as if I was offending him. Of course there are still ascetic traditions that have an initiatory structure, and for example the *sādhu*s who Bevilacqua (2017) studies renounce the secular world, and devote themselves to the ideologies of the religious orders in which they become initiated. As explained before, in this work I concentrate on regular, lay people who practice yoga while living in the society, and hence their aim is not to renounce the secular world. In India, as I have mentioned earlier, some aspects of yoga's "objectified knowledge" is common or public because yoga philosophy overlaps and is partly embedded into the larger framework of Hinduism. To give one concrete example, the theory that everything consists of three qualities, *triguna*, which derives from *saṃkhya* philosophy and also forms the cosmological base of Patañjali's *Yogasāstra*, has not only travelled as a yoga theory outside of India but is also crucial for the everyday life of Tamil villagers (see Daniel 1987) who most probably are not yoga practitioners. Indian practitioners have, thus, an advantage in their socio-cultural framework when they study yoga.

Yoga classes or courses are often structured based on level of experience:

beginner, intermediate or advanced, although these specific terms are not always used. It is also common that there are no 'levels' but all students come together. Even so a certain hierarchy is not absent. People take note if someone takes yoga seriously and is a "practitioner," or if someone takes it as a hobby and is a "class goer". Yoga thus parallels Zarilli (1984, 199) observations on martial arts: "There is underlying, unspoken system of ranking evident simply in the amount of "knowledge" an individual has – in how much he has been taught." He also recognizes that learning the art "takes perseverance and dedication and majority of students disappearer after the first few weeks. … If an individual begins training and continues to come back and works hard, then he is taught. If he leaves, he is simply forgotten". (Zarilli 1984, 199). As a contemporary phenomenon yoga teachers have also observed that students come and go and they are sometimes referred to as "tourists" who are "shopping" for nice experiences. Most teacher informants expressed the lack of dedication of (potential) students. Repeatedly I was told that most Indians practice yoga only for health and fitness. Such statements both emphasized the spiritual goal of yoga and also dismissed the reductionist, "fitness" approach.

In a lecture (15.12.2005) at an international conference, one of the deemed University directors, Dr. Nagarathna, addressed the question of students' varying commitment to yoga by explaining that all knowledge is a pyramid. She contended that, in many fields, only a few people will ask serious, essential questions, perhaps one out of a thousand, a structure that is evident you compare the small number of students who complete 10th standard and a Ph.D. program. She also acknowledged that all basic practices (of yoga) are necessary for different people, who may enter in different ways that are appropriate for them. All types are available for different types of people. Naturally, she also made a reference to scriptures commenting that the *Bhagavad Gīta* also says this[14]. In short, not everyone is a master, in fact very few will ever reach that status and become virtuosos.

To describe the hierarchy of knowledge acquisition, using words such as beginner, intermediate and advanced does not stand out as proper terminology, especially as there are better, and more descriptive terms. In particular, Lambek recognizes differences in individuals' personal investment in a particular discipline and he attempts to "describe the relationship of a person to a given body of knowledge at

[14] The triad of *karmayoga, bhaktiyoga* and *jñanayoga* presented in chapter 3.1.1 is seen as an ideology that people with different capabilities and inclinations have access to yoga practice that suit them.

any given moment, and the kind and degree of interest taken in it" (1997, 135). To do this, Lambek draws on Schutz' categories of 'the expert', 'the well-informed citizen' and 'the man on the street', whom Lambek transforms to 'people on the path'.

> The expert's knowledge is restricted to a limited field but therein it is clear and distinct. His opinions are based upon warranted assertions ... By contrast, 'the man on the street' has a working knowledge of many fields which are not necessarily coherent with one another. His is a knowledge of recipes indicating how to bring forth in typical situations typical results by typical means ... In all matters not connected with such practical purposes of immediate concern the man on the street accepts his sentiments and passions as guide. The 'well-informed citizen,' says Schutz, is short for "the citizen who aims at being well informed ... To be well informed means to him to arrive at reasonably founded opinions …" (1964: 122). Well-informed citizens are thus somewhere between the expert and the man on the street in the amount of knowledge they have and also in their concern with its legitimation. (Lambek 1993, 69-70 ref. Schutz 1964, 122 [selection of edit is mine]).

Importanlty, Lambek distinguishes experts as "people with an active mastery of knowledge; they hold it as a resource and make use of it to address problems", whereas 'people on the path' assume a role of a relatively 'passive' consumer in regards of knowledge, they "seek knowledge when necessary, but are content to apply it second hand, that is, by means of the expert." (Lambek 1993, 69-70.) If well-informed citizens are situated in between the other two categories, they are also, by definition, more open-minded, while persons on the path are pragmatic. Lambek (1993, 70) additionally notes: "ordinary people do not express loyalty to a single discipline to the exclusion of the others, and even the experts often try to learn from one another. Nevertheless, people are opinionated and make various kinds of choices."

For yoga, I would use both 'man on the street' and 'person on the path' making a distinctive note that 'man on the street' is almost completely passive, and relies entirely on the ideas and experiences of others, whereas the 'person on the path' aligns with Lambek's (1993, 70) description: "they contract for the knowledge and gain specific answers or solutions but not a direct understanding of the means by which the answers were arrived at."

> Their interest in knowledge is practical and immediate: gaining the correct knowledge to get a specific job done.The person on the path does not want to control the means of production of knowledge, but merely to make use of its fruits. Nor is the person on the path interested specifically either in adhering to orthodoxy or in questioning the authority of what is provided. (Lambek 1993, 103)

Lambek (1993, 104) states that, "virtually everyone strives also, to one degree or another, to become and act as a well-informed citizen." Although this might be the case for Islamic knowledge in Mayotte, in the context of contemporary yoga, it could be argued that the masses often settle for being a'person on the path'. However, Lambek (1993, 139) notes that those well-informed citizens who perform in public often gain the respect of their audience. Arguably, public affirmation also motivates yoga students alongside their genuine interest:

> What matters is less how much knowledge given individuals control (i.e., know, have access to), even assuming that it could be quantified, than what they are socially recognized (by themselves no less than by others) as controlling and the implications of this for their practice. What individuals are recognized as knowing may be both more and less than what they actually know. (Lambek 1993, 70-71)

At stake, then, is both self-evaluation and evaluation by others in the relative degrees of socially defined knowledge and competence.

It is noteworthy that Lambek (1993, 69) suggests this Schutzian terminology less as roles in a structure than as shifting phenomenological perspectives, emphasizing their situationality: ”a man is a 'client' not only because he is defined that way by others, but because this describes his immediate interests in a particular situation, his attitude to a particular piece of knowledge at a particular time.” He uses also distinction between active and passive, agent and patient, but acknowledges that the abstract ideal types are for many situations far too extreme (1993, 70).

> People who are experts in one field may be clients or consumers in another (or even in their own). Likewise, their perspective on the degree and manner of integration of the various traditions shifts according to their social position within their respective disciplines, that is, according to the distribution of knowledge and interest. (Ibid).

I argue this is rather important and must add that some discussions in the field revealed that adults who are an experts in one field often struggled to adopt the role of a beginner in a yoga class. For example, I was told of ”big bosses” who came to a yoga class and expecting to be treated as that. Regardless, the task of the teacher, according to all the teachers I had a chance to talk about it with, is ”to win their heart” and ”ignite interest” and the attitude seemed generally quite adaptive and understanding to the realities of contemporary yoga. Thus despite some frustrations, teachers mostly displayed compassion or even humor in regard to new students, whereas it was the dedicated practitioners, ’people on the path’ who seemed most concerned about the future of yoga.

4.3 Performing knowledge

4.3.1 Ritual or performance

From the beginning of my research, I was interested in the transmission of yoga tradition. Thus, several of my research questions focused on how, when, where and by whom is traditional knowledge is expressed and ”revealed” to others. Whether we look at it as tradition or as a discipline, yoga contains a lot of expert knowledge, therefore, we should look at how it is being taught and learned. At issue here is alos the embodied processes of transmission, and not just the objectified knowledge itself, and how

embodied knowledge accumulates in such a way that one become recognized to embody the tradition itself. In order to answer these questions, it is important to explore the contemporary field of yoga and especially the public ways of spreading the teachings of yoga: that is, yoga classes, talks on yoga (*satsang*) and of course yoga literature. Despite my initial idea to explore also the yoga literature this work concentrates on non-literary interaction and narratives. My discussion of yoga classes will also be mostly restricted to this section only. It would be an interesting study on its own to address the aforementioned questions but it would require a completely different kind of research than this one. However, I find it extremely important to conceptualize yoga classes theoretically as contexts of knowledge acquisition in order to frame understanding of the narratives that I will be analyzing in the coming chapters.

Yoga classes have become a pretty standard way of learning yoga in the contemporary world. Their importance as a central vehicle of knowledge transmission should thus be acknowledged. In the field, I tried to conceptualize, in anthropological terms, what kind of an event a yoga class is, as it was clear that it was something special. That is, yoga classes are different, for example, from other contexts that could be seen as more ”purely” religious, medical, educational, or fitness-oriented. . In addition, from another perspective, for many, yoga class forms a casual part of everyday life. In consequence, could it or should it, for example, be seen as a ritual, or something entirely else?

Let us first consider the proposition that yoga classes are rituals. There are many ritualistic features that frame the yoga classes as an event, like the mantras that are often performed either in the beginning or at the end of class, or both, the other sequential order of practices that take place during the class, the specific participation roles that take place usually, the specific time and space and so on, not to forget what kind of an experience the practice itself is and what kind of effects it may have. Furthermore, De Michelis (2004) does postulate a MPY session as a secular healing ritual. Although I do agree to some extent with the possibilities of exploring this idea further, in the end, I would not call a yoga class a ritual, even if some kind of personal transformation is most often the key motive for attending yoga classes, be it health-wise or spiritually. In my view, the participation structure of a MPY yoga class is too open-ended to be defined as a ritual: for example, some attend the classes for fitness, others are seeking relief for medical problem(s), others still are on deep self-study and/ or spiritual path. Across these motivations, some attendees adopt a customer role while

others adopt a student role, and everything in between. In short, there is no consensus on what is really taking place and what are the aims of the practice.

Therefore, instead of treating yoga classes as rituals, I look at yoga classes and talks on yoga, *satsangs,* as performances of knowledge. For instance, Alter (2008) observes the performativity of *shivir* – that is, yoga camps for general public or for institutions such as prisons, the police, schools etc – that combine lectures, demonstrations and group participations to promote yoga and other ”cultural” traditions. Naturally the *shivir* draw from the classical yoga texts to advocate for sociomoral reform. They are often large scale or even mass events, that can attract hundreds and periodically several thousand participants. Similarly, the ”yoga science camps” of famous swami Ramdev, who has several yoga and *āyurveda* shows on television, can have tens of thousands participants. According to Alter (2008, 42-45) all camps, but especially the massive ones are staged and strategically choreographed performances that reflect the vitality of the organizations sponsoring them. Also, he views the smaller scale public park activities as promotions of the organizations, thus, in his view it is all about attracting attention. He compares these performances against the medieval texts in which practicing yoga is exactly the opposite: to be practiced alone in an isolated hut built far from other people in the middle of forest.[15] (Alter 2008, 44).

Alter thus views *shivir* as mirror opposite to the ”yogic truth” of esoteric secret that is communicated ”only by an enlightened guru to an adept disciple (Alter 2008, 38). For Alter *shivir* are ”meta-commentaries of the nature and meaning of yoga in practice” and as such representations that reference the ”real” disciplined practice of yoga without being designed to be the ”real thing” as such. He sees *shivir* as a spectacle,

> In any case, my argument is that *shivir* performativity is self-conscious form of embodied discourse involving various degrees of ambivalence about the relationship between mind and body, worldly concerns and transcendence. The goal is not to ”do” yoga, but to constitute it through reiterative performances involving an identified adept mastery, who conducts the *shivir*, and an audience whose participation severs to make manifest, in the public sphere, what by the very nature of yoga is not manifest and mystical. Though completely ritualized in terms of structure, *shivir* do not function as rituals, in the sense that rituals constitute the grounded reality of abstract, ineffable beliefs. *Shivir* metonymically index a set of practices that transcend reality, and it is the indexicality of performance that is – ethnographically speaking – ”genuine” in this context. The more spectacular the performance, the more genuine the indexicality and its various entailments fo well-being and health. (Alter 2008, 38-39).

In concluding, Alter stresses that it is important to understand the different contexts and form of practice, and to understand the way in which representations of yoga in the classical literature gets blurred with modern and postmodern formulations. He

[15] Alter refers to *Haṭhayogapradīpikā* verse 1.12. but in a popularized way as in this verse it is mentioned that the location should be in such a place that it is possible to receive alms

emphasizes the importance of historicization and critical scrutiny in order to understand why certain claims are made, rather than whether they are true, and performativity enables not to the interpretations of meaning seriously in a way that a radical historicization of practice would not (Alter 2008, 46-47). He (2008, 38) also observes that any yoga class, not just *shivir*, is in some sense a performance.

4.3.2 Classroom yoga as (co-)performance

In contrast to Alter's analysis of *shivir,* those spectacles on stage that perform a kind of a nationalistic and organization promotional narrative, I pursue a different approach to the yoga class as a performance, one that stems from linguistic anthropology. Performance, as a term, is closely associated with language, poetics and verbal art, and "emerged as a key term in sectors of linguistic anthropology and folklore in the early 1970's drawing together under its rubric at least three critical reorientations then energizing those allied fields" (Bauman and Briggs 1990, 78). Bauman and Briggs (1990, 60) also observe that "performances are not simply artful uses of language that stand apart both from day-to-day life and from larger questions of meaning… a given performance is tied to a number of speech events that precede and succeed it". In various ways, then, performances are also "anchored in and inseparable from its context of use" (Bauman and Briggs 1990, 73).

Although I observe the whole event of a yoga class as a kind of an performance, the yoga classes may also include mini performances, such as the telling traditional tales or statements that make implicit or explicit reference to yoga texts. As such, and in addition to utilizing the bodily register of knowledge, the embodied knowledge, yoga classes are essential in building and putting in action quite an interesting web of indexes to yoga's "intertextual library," a concept from Siikala and Siikala (2005, 57) to which I referred to earlier. How big a role, or better said in which proportion the objectified and embodied knowledge are transmitted depend widely on both the discipline of yoga, and the individual personality and competence of the performer, the teacher.

To start with, on a very general plane, the goal of yoga is transformation in a state of consciousness or being, regardless of whether the aim is esoteric or mundane. Simply put, some kind of self-transformation is at the core of yoga. This transformation takes place through the practice of yoga. It cannot be reached, for example, only by reading or listening about yoga. In a yoga class, the teacher guides the students through the practice by performing expert knowledge in a way that the effect of the practice can

be felt. Over time and with repetition, parts of the imparted knowledge becomes embodied by the students, it is inscribed into their bodily habitus. As Alter (2008, 43) notes, ”it [the practice regime] becomes a matter of second nature”. In this process, the words of a teacher constitute performative speech acts in Austinian terms (1962), that is, they are recognized as experts ‘orders’ that the students are expected to follow. How central is the role of the teacher in the practice and, thus, the illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect of the teaching depends on the framework of each yoga style, their practice genre, and the specific setting. Yet, there is no reason to reduce our understanding of teaching into these terms. Another way to describe yoga teaching is that the teacher has the potential to put the student on a journey within by the embodied indexicality, referring to the bodies and minds of the students, thereby reaching ever deeper.

One of the really established teachers, *yogacharya*, whom I had a chance to interview explained that it is up to the individual, the student, to decide how they take up the subject. Many teachers on several different occasions thus emphasized that it is the task of the teacher to ignite the interest of the student. The *yogacharya* also said it is challenging to reach so many different minds, but it seemed obvious that it was, at least for him, what makes teaching interesting. This notion further brings us to the competence of the teacher, how he is able to perform, to connect with the students and make them connect with themselves in one way or the other, and to connect with the yoga practice and tradition. When the hierarchical asymmetry of *guru-śisya* relationship is discussed, especially among the Western post-modern yoga practitioners with egalitarian value base, it is forgotten that in contemporary world, without students, there is no *guru.* As it has been already discussed, performing knowledge and the evaluation of performance is essential for the recognition and establishment of an expert’s respectable reputation. First and foremost, experts must perform their knowledge, which then might form a powerful source of social capital. In yoga practice, the power of performance is evident most of all in the effects. I claim that teacher evoking connection in the students with themselves is the poetics of teaching as a performance, entailing both a shared, obejctifed, and deeply private, embodied, dimensions.

In my view, yoga classes are thus, in some sense, similar to the telling of traditional narratives. In both cases, the performance might combine entertaining parts with parts evoked to solve specific problems, whether they are corporeal, emotional or moral, in appropriate, often subtle ways. Oftentimes, the decoding of the

performances's meaning is, in the end, the responsibility of the audience (see for example Basso 1990), although the teacher will do one's best in sharing one's experience in both verbal and non-verbal ways. This brings to the fore also the competence of the audience. References in the yoga classes to yoga philosophy can be short, subtle allusions in addition to instances of longer stories that also take place. If one is not familiar with the concepts used, nor their larger contexts, and especially if one is not oriented in wanting to learn more about the philosophy of yoga, these fleeting allusions can be easily missed. Therefore, it can be argued that in midst of physical practices the sharing of objectified knowledge can be either caught or dismissed, and this may cause further misunderstanding what the teaching in fact contains. A yoga class is a teaching situation but as the *yogacharya* comments, it is not always in the interest of participants to learn, "they have their own understanding."

As in Basso's (1990) description of using traditional storytelling of 'speaking with names', when the reference is more indexical than descriptive the understanding and interpretation lies largely on the audience. If one is not socialized into the discourse genre, and lacks the required knowledge, the whole speech event is rather cryptic. In many cases the same applies to yoga classes in which bits and pieces of yoga philosophy are fed as indexical references to ignite students' interest, since during classes, yoga practice receives the main emphasis. In *satsangs,* knowledge is passed on more coherently as people have come to listen and hear about various aspects of yoga. In both cases, one important issue is the question of to where indexical allusions direct students. In the case of Apache narratives (see Basso 1990), the indexical allusions in stories direct listeners to places in landscape that hold special meaning. In case of yoga, "the landscape" can be one's life history as written over the body as well as the yoga philosophy shared in previous storytelling contexts. Both build new connections. If one has no previous knowledge of yoga, the stories' and allusions' indexicality have no meaning as the listener is not able to discern the intertextual link. Allusions to yoga philosophy during classes might thus ignite interest but they can also be misinterpreted due to the lack of the proper intertextual frame. Thus, repeated occurrence is needed in building up the knowledge. In the traditional *parampara* it comes naturally, but with contemporary yoga, this is not necessarily the case unless one is devoted to classes, and preferably takes the initiative and turns to the books or attends yoga talks, *satsangs,* for more knowledge.

Given the potential obscurity of the allusions to yoga philosophy, students more

common observe competence of the performer, that is, the instructor, in yoga classes. Bauman (1975, 293) defined performance as a distinct frame that is available as a communicative resource to speakers in particular communities. Yet, in undertaking a performance, performers must display their communicative competence to the audience. Competence rest on both knowledge and the ability to speak in the ways prescribed by the performance genre. The audience is thus not only evaluating skill and effectiveness of the performer's competence, but also interested in learning and experiencing the performance genre itself (Bauman 1975, 293).

In parallel, my claim is that the experience of performance is of dual nature during a yoga class: appreciation of the performance of the teacher, and of oneself performing the guided practice. Bauman (1975, 302) notes: "(t)he emergent quality of performance resides in the interplay between communicative resources, individual competence, and the goals of the participants, within the context of particular situations." Before going to the very influential notions on poetics and performance by Bauman and Briggs (1990), I repeat my claim that teacher evoking connection in students with themselves is the poetics of teaching as a performance, in addition to oral and visual aesthetics. Good yoga teachers are often great story tellers and also inspiring demonstrators of their own practice.

Furthermore, in the yoga context, *āsana* practice can be, and often is, appreciated for its aesthetics. Alter (2008, 38) mentions B. K. S. Iyengar's performance of *āsana* as embodied art as perhaps the clearest example of manifestation of perfected practice. In fact, yoga demonstrations have been crucial in the popularization of yoga. There was also a historical period when *yogis* were deprived of their normal income of trade and needed to perform for their livelihood (Singleton 2010, 55). In India yoga competitions are also quite popular, especially, for children and youngsters. Even the world renouncing *sādhus* sometimes perform for money or at festivals to demonstrate their practice, although this is not approved by all as some take is as a personal and private part of their religious practice, *sādhana*. A Yogī Raj, an expert on *āsana* practice, told Bevilacqua:

> *āsana* can become like a *nātak*, a theatrical act, that is for the public, not to be confused with the *sādhanā* that is the real practice. Another *samnyāsin*, who lives close to Shantiniketan, said that Yoga is a hidden knowledge (*vidā*), like
>
> Tantra, that it is not for the public, and that only *āsanas* can be shown. (Bevilacqua 2017, 201).

Thus, when one claims that "(t)here is no performance in yoga. There is a sheer pleasure just in being attentive to the body" as McIlwain and Sutton (2014, 660) do, it is not entirely correct. However, their notion of that to "the untrained eye, different styles of

movement and different shapes are all that is seen when looking at a body (McIlwain and Sutton 2014, 657) is crucial, and they make a good start at describing some elements learning a bodily skill entails, and the effects of words on bodies, as knowledge is literally incorporated. Nevertheless, I argue that practicing, or performing *āsanas* is a special kind of body language that one learns to both ”speak” and to understand in its own practice genre. The yoga classes that I attended and observed in Bangalore (and beyond) were very much of interactive kind: the teacher constantly sees what happens and adjusts the teaching accordingly. As such it constitutes a kind of a co-performance, as the performance of the audience has an effect on the performance of the teacher.

4.3.3 From performance to decontextualization and entextualization

A professor of Indian origin working in the USA posed two important questions to me. Firstly, who is to say how yoga is to be taught? He protested against the phenomena, that rich Americans are coming to India expecting to be taught the same way as in America, which in result affects the teaching, and therefore, the Westernized yoga is being taken back to India. Secondly, what is yoga? He criticized the fact that only a small portion of yoga is taken to stand for yoga, for instance, head stands, which are but one *yoga āsana.* He further criticized how many are teaching yoga without any relation to philosophy. In a pointed turn, he reminded me that I, for example, was talking only about *hatha yoga* as yoga, as is often the case nowadays. But, *rāja yoga* or *laya yoga* would be entirely different, and what the holy men*, sādhus*, might actually practice only a simple hand movement with awareness to expand their consciousness, or hold their hand up for 15 years until it is dead as a full devotion. In short, only a small portion of a vast system of yoga is taken and understood as the system. The yoga practitioners I interacted with more frequently also expressed also their concern, quite justifiable, about people taking a two week course in India and then traveling back home and start teaching yoga, in short taking expert position without having expert knowledge.

It is against this background that I originally came interested in the idea of decontextualization and entextualization (see Bauman and Briggs 1990), text and textuality (see Hanks 1989). Viewing teaching situation as a performance, the continuity of those performances is of uttermost importance, again in dual, or triple sense: the whole story of yoga cannot be revealed or performed exhaustively in one performance, any teacher will teach only a fraction of one’s own potential and knowledge at any

given limited time and space, and not every expert is virtuoso. Yet, there is one more aspect: what happens to the performed knowledge after performance?

> Performance is a fleeting event which dissappears. To have social consequences it has to be given a durable form, which can be decontextualised and recontextualised, in which case the effect can be quite unexpected and unintended from the point of view of the original actor or author. (Siikala and Siikala 2005, 31)

This is why the idea of performance is a gateway to the processes of entextualization and decontextualization. As Bauman and Brigg argue, performances serve to decontextualize speech, that is, to make speech form available for transmission into new contexts: "Performance heightens awareness of the act of speaking and licenses the audience to evaluate the skill and effectiveness of the performer's accomplishment. By its very nature, then, performance potentiates decontextualization. (Bauman and Briggs 1990, 73)." Through decontextualization, speech forms are thus "entextualized," that is, rendered into a stable semiotic form. Textuality, at the background of this terminology refers to the quality of coherence (Hanks, 1989, 96).

As Bauman and Briggs elaborate:

> At the heart of the process of decentering discourse is the more fundamental process-entextualization. In simple terms, though it is far from simple, it is the process of rendering discourse extractable, of making a stretch of linguistic production into a unit-a text-that can be lifted out of its interactional setting. A text, then, from this vantage point, is discourse rendered decontextualizable. Entextualization may well incorporate aspects of context, such that the resultant text carries elements of its history of use within it.

Finally, then entextualized speech can be "recontextualized," that is performed in new contexts. If, as I argue, yoga classes are best understood as performances of knowledge, one can thus analyze how teachers recurrently decontextualize, entextualize, and recontextualize both embodied and objectified yoga knowledge in the course of their teaching.

This line of analysis, would help us understand just how yoga knowledge is transmitted and how teachings move among the transnational communities (cf. Bauman 1996). Performers of knowledge who have less experience, and therefore, less competence, are prone to replicate the performance of the more experienced performers, who are seen to embody the tradition (see Urban 1996, 36). This can be easily observed in yoga classes: "young" teachers (young in experience, not necessarily in age) "follow the script", the typical was of performing, whereas the senior teachers tend to improvise more. Additionally Silverstein and Urban (1996, 10) point out that textuality and entextualization practices are about "identity". I would claim that transforming into a *yogi* in contemporary contexts necessitates becoming a member of a community (cf. Collins 1996; Mertz, 1996) and it would be interesting to study the linguistic and non-

linguistic processes by which practitioners are socialized into the discursive practices of performances. My initial idea was to observe practice and theory as co-texts, but this argument needs to be developed further in another work.

Nevertheless, I argue it is the decontextualization of teaching and practicing contexts from one-to-one teaching with a *guru* to the realm on yoga classes, that has heightened the importance yoga texts into the realm of practice. I see it as a way to fill the void of a missing *guru-śisya* relationship or to complement the existing one, which might not be consistent enough to ensure the knowledge transmission. Bevilacqua (2017) observed that in living ascetic traditions, in which the renunciants are fully immersed to their spiritual practice, the textual tradition is not used, but knowledge is passed on by solely performing it verbally and non-verbally. Whereas in the non-ascetic realm, certain parts of the intertextual library of yoga tradition have been entextualized, and made to represent the teachings of yoga in the contemporary disciplines.

5 Practitioner narratives and the social reality of contemporary yoga in Bangalore

In the previous chapters, I presented a short scholarly overview of history of yoga both as described in the textual traditions of ”pre-modern” yogas and by scholars discussing the more modern forms of yoga. In contrast to scholars who question the factuality of claims that link modern yoga directly to pre-modern yogas, I presented an anthropological analysis of how people create historical narratives of an authorative past that is then used to frame the present. I then discussed the authority of textual traditions compared to popular traditions as well as the traditional, institutionalized authority of *guru* in both performing and transmitting knowledge. Drawing on Michael Lambek's work, I then argued that it is best to understand yoga in terms of knowledge rather than in terms of tradition. Toward this end, I distinguished between two interconnected categories of knowledge—objectified and embodied—and examined how they need to be performed in order to gain power and effect. The hierarchy of knowledge was introduced from 'the man on the street' and 'the person on the path' to 'the informed citizen' and finally to the 'expert' position. I view yoga classes and *satsang*s as performances of knowledge.

In this chapter I explore how the Indian yoga teachers and students among whom I conducted my research narrated yoga. Initially, during my fieldwork, I was especially interested in the lived practices, the interconnection of theory and practice, and was hoping to get local, regular students to share their views. However, although I did my best to get people to talk to me about yoga and to reflect on their yoga practice, I encountered the following problem: when I asked the regular students basically anything about yoga, they told me to ask their teacher, their *guru*. Yet, when I approached the teachers, more often than not, they would tell me to read the books. Of course, it is probable that people did not want to waste their time or energy with me, especially as my questions were of beginner level, and as such uninteresting for those who had knowledge and, yet, difficult for those who did not. Still, I had the feeling that oftentimes my interlocutors were worried if they had the competence to answer my questions. For example, when I asked one of my teachers for an interview, he declined, stating that he did not know Sanskrit and hence could not refer to the authorative yoga texts. He, however, was expert on the embodied knowledge and had specialized in yoga therapy. But clearly he did not regard his knowledge as authoritative enough to discuss yoga for the purpose of my work. Nevertheless, I did manage to interview several

people properly and I had innumerable conversations with so-called regular students. The following narratives, dervived from these interviews and conversations, thus provide a peek at the social reality of contemporary yoga in Bangalore during the time of my research.

Before presenting the narratives, however, I will discuss the practice of attending yoga classes in Bangalore. In contrast to pre-modern times, these days technically everyone has access to yoga knowledge. I was sometimes reminded during my fieldwork that yoga used to be restricted to Brahmin men or adepts initiated into a closed tradition. Contemporary yoga classes are thus quite different from the traditional learning context in that they are open to all, require no formal commitment and are paid for.

5.1.1 Attending yoga classes in Bangalore

In 2005 in Bangalore yoga classes, books, audios, and different kinds of events were widely available, both in English and, even more so, in local languages. I was told that yoga was being taught to children in many schools, to police officers and in other governmental institutions like hospitals. In addition, there were also TV and radio programs that taught yoga, mostly in local languages. In fact, so many institutions were propagating yoga at this time (see also Alter 2004, 2008; Strauss 2005, 2008) and to great popular effect. For example, the TV *guru* Swami Ramdev visited Bangalore while I was there attracting an audience of about 4000 people.

As I searched for yoga classes where I could conduct my research, I met both teachers who promoted themselves extensively but also teachers who were not really advertising at all, rather, you had to *know* they existed. Two of my teachers were more of his type: one I found from the local yellow pages, and the other was a recommendation of a friend. Ultimately, the yoga classes that I choose to attend taught two particular yoga styles, namely, Iyengar Yoga and the yoga style of s-VYASA (Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana), or VYASA, also known as Vivekananda Kendra as it is referred to by my informants, and also Strauss (2002).[16] [-> FN There is another, and older institute in Tamil Nadu by the same name and it was

[16] There is another, and older institute in Tamil Nadu by the same name and it was creating confusion so the name was changed, and therefore I use the acronym of VYASA when referring to the classes in the city stemming from the programs developed by the main institution of s-VYASA. I have later been also to the main institute of Iyengar Yoga, Ramamani Iyengar Yoga Memorial Institute (RIMYI) in Pune for a month at a time in 2012, 2014, 2016, 2019 and for two weeks in 2018, and additionally visited the Bellur Iyengar Yoga Center for a week in 2018, but as explained before I am using only the data gathered during the field work, with maybe few carefully thought exceptions.

creating confusion so the name was changed, and therefore I use the acronym of VYASA when referring to the classes in the city stemming from the programs developed by the main institution of s-VYASA. I have later been also to the main institute of Iyengar Yoga, Ramamani Iyengar Yoga Memorial Institute (RIMYI) in Pune for a month at a time in 2012, 2014, 2016, 2019 and for two weeks in 2018, and additionally visited the Bellur Iyengar Yoga Center for a week in 2018, but as explained before I am using only the data gathered during the field work, with maybe few carefully thought exceptions.] Many people, but not all, with whom I had the honor to interact with were teachers and practitioners of either of these yoga styles.

Yoga classes in general did not seem to have any specific assessment prior registration, one could easily just join, which means open access assuming one can pay the fees and has the time to participate. There were also teachers who interviewed new students to get to know them a bit and to be informed should there be any health issues. I participated and observed the classes by participating in them on daily basis and across various instructional levels. On one occasion during the first weeks, when I attended a practice class meant for teachers, which including more advanced *āsanas* without instructions, I was kindly directed to any of the other classes. The subtext was clear: the other classes were more suitable for my novice level of experience, as I had been taking classes only for one year before, once a week. After settling in and having chosen the sites I attended regularly Iyengar Yoga classes of two institutes and one VYASA style course, or ”batch” as they called it, held in a hall of a temple area. I also visited the s-VYASA, the deemed-to-be University in Anekal, outside of the city. Both these yoga styles had spread also internationally, and all teachers I studied with were well accustomed to international students, even if only one of the three places regularly had also some non-Indian students. Thus, for the most part, I was among the local students. The classes were held in English in combination with local languages. Most commonly the classes were either 75 or 90 minutes. The group size of the classes I attended varied from maximum of 12, to approximately 15-35, and something around 100.

The class schedule was constructed to enable attendance by regular people with multiple duties, whereas I juggled between the different classes and found my own rhythm, attending 1-2 classes (sometimes even 3) each day and writing notes afterwards. In addition, I met some people outside yoga classes. However, this was often challenging since most people had day jobs and family duties in addition to teaching or practicing yoga. The yoga classes took place really early in the morning,

earliest starting already at 5.30am, 6am or 6.30am in order to enable the employed people to attend before their work. Naturally there were also evening classes after regular office hours. In one institute there were also separate classes for ladies before lunch time, and I was told that it was the only time of the day housewives who were caring for families had time away from their duties, starting their chores at 4-5am and ending around 10-12pm. The ladies' classes were designed to meet the special needs of women: the demands of life as a woman, female anatomy and physiology, hormonal cycles, psychology and so forth. Likewise, both Iyengar Yoga institutes offered also 'medical classes' designed to cater to the health issues of students in more detail. Yoga therapeutics was also an imporatant part of the regimens of s-VYASA,

In addition to improving women's health, the aim of separate classes for ladies was also about creating a safe environment for women to practice (see Wittich 2017, 233), as many women would refuse to practice with men. Their teacher commented that many of his students were of "traditional families", and for example they definitely would not be wearing shorts like in the bigger institutes (for example in Pune)! Many women practiced in their traditional costumes of *salwar kameez*. Of course, sweat pants and t-hirts were also used my many. When I started to practice with the small group of men, I was in fact first asked to stay a bit more to the side, separate to the rest of the group. Soon I asked if I could come closer, because I wanted to hear better. I was allowed as the distance was intended only for my comfort, and it was not a requirement. On one occasion a *guru* who was supposed to give a talk made a request that there should be no women within 50 meters distance to him, which stirred some emotions among the participants. Some thougt it was insulting to the female participants, and portrayed backward thinking, whereas others found it hilarious. Some else gave the talk: it was too much to ask and was condemned as having a "big *ego"* and lack of self-control.

However, I was later told that some of the ladies were a bit wary of the international attendees like myself as non-Indians are not living according to the Indian traditional values. Naturally, I dressed modestly and tried to be well-behaved, but in retrospect, I must have behaved like an outsider assuming for example my personal space like any Finnish person. For example, in the congested buses, I always seemed to be the only person who was in the way, as I was anchored to my spot, and not in a constant flux, like the Indian traffic in general. In India, in general, notions of personal space are quite different, such that, to my eyes, they seemed not to exist at all, whether

in the city or in a yoga class. However, over the months, I learned to practice yoga with other people's feet over my face. In general Bangalorean people were friendly, kind and helpful, although in ny regards my "confusion" seemed to be amusing to many. Yet, in a megacity I could feel a kind of "fight for survival" mentality, which surely is less among the higher strata of society, and sometimes as an outsider it was difficult to know, for example, in yoga class when to stand up for one's right to take a place or not. As such the yoga classes reflected the social life of Bangalore and of how people related to one another.

In general, the local students moved in and out to the classes quite quickly, and the teachers were busy too. Thus, there was not much "roaming around", as Indians would say, after either the morning or evening classes, as people hurried to their chores. There were two exceptions, though. One small group of men had always *chai,* delicious Indian tea, or coffee after their morning class and after I had sweated throughout their quite masculine practices for few times they invited me to join them. Also, in the other institute I eventually learned that the ladies came earlier and socialized *before* their class, to which I usually hurried last minute after finishing my notes from the previous class.[17] Regardless of whether students socialized before or after the classes, each class formed a small community of students dedicated to their yoga practice and to their *guru*. During the classes the *guru* was truly the master of the class, and attended well to their audiences, all in their personal ways and in line with the practice genre of the disclipline they were teaching.[18]

The gurus all were quite skilfull in keeping the students attentive to their practice with their instructions, and also by telling stories and explaining various aspects of yoga. In this sense, objectified knowledge was being built bit by bit by attending the yoga classes. One of the teachers had a more systematic approach and gave mini lectures on different yoga philosophical topics embedded into the practice, whereas another teacher used and explained yoga philosophical terms only sporadically, as references, and kept yoga lectures separate from the teaching of practice sessions. A third teacher admitted to not being knowledgeable about yoga philosophy and did not talk about it. Thus, also the three teachers varied in the degree to which they incorporated yoga philosophy, that is, the objectified knowledge of yoga, in their

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[17] When I managed to come earlier we started to chat, and as I confessed to being quite homesick the suspicion, of which I was unaware, was released. It turned out we are alike after all, having families and caring for other people.]

[18] There are yoga styles in which interaction between the teacher and the students is not essential, and its gravity depends also on the individual.

classes, they were nonetheless experts in their own field: all had good command of the practical side of yoga, of the embodied knowledge. What is more, they were all inspiring teachers and very highly regarded by their students. I too respected them a lot for their knowledge and skill in teaching. One of the teachers was more strict in his style, but the other two used quite a lot of humor in creating a relaxed, yet, concentrated atmosphere. The classes were really inspiring and enjoyable.

Overall, it could be said that the emphasis during all this yoga classes was in learning and performing the practice of yoga, and in these yoga styles practice included *āsanas*, to some extent *prānāyāma* and chanting mantras. Iyengar Yoga is known for its attention to great detail in the practice of *āsanas,* which grew and developed out of the longlasting, dedicated and vigorous practice and teachings of B.K.S. Iyengar and his students. However, the other eight limbs of Patañjali's yoga are practiced also through the *āsanas.* The philosophy of Iyengar Yoga has a major emphasis on Patañjali's teaching, but also many other aspects of major teachings in the wide array of yoga traditions are present. Therefore, embodied knowledge is at the heart of Iyengar Yoga and the objectified knowledge is integrated into it. S-VYASA had a slightly different approach, it had built a regimen, or better said regimens, based on a selected collection of varied parts of theories and practices, samples of objectified knowledge of both yoga and other traditions. They owed main merit to swami Vivekananda and continued in his line of combining the best of India, that is spirituality, with the best of the West, that is, science. However, in the VYASA course I attended the main emphasis was on practice of yoga, and it did not (to my recollection) include any of the other techniques.

Both styles would deserve a proper analysis as disciplines, systems of knowledge. Here I am able to present ideas only on a very general level, and do not attempt to provide an account of, for example, the core of their teachings as disciplines. Both styles have produced an extensive selection of publications. As disciplines they have also their own verbal and non-verbal languages, including specific stylistic features, that could be studied as genres. But, all these fascinating ideas are beyond the scope of this work. Instead, what I was puzzled with during my field research was this: if in yoga classes the practice consists mainly of the bodily techniques, where is the claimed spirituality? And if practicing *āsanas* does not make one a yogi, then how does one attain such a status?

5.1.2 Acquiring and enhancing yoga knowledge: the narrative of yoga as a process

In Bangalore I encountered a stereotypical distinction that Indians are very spiritual and that the Indian yoga is still ”authentic” due to its spiritual goals, whereas by nature Westerners are more materialistic and rational. Some of the s-VYASA lectures for example utilized this kind of rhetoric, drawing from Vivekananda’s ideas. However, many informants also ridiculed this line of thinking, including one retired scholar, who said that nowadays Indians can also be quite materialistic. Additionally, many teachers commented that Indian people come to yoga basically for health and fitness. Some even stated that Westerners can in fact be good students, because they want to learn, they study the scriptures and they don’t take the knowledge of yoga for granted like the local people do. In an interview[19] I had a chance to ask one of my respected teachers about it: how does the practice move from from body to mind and then eventually to soul, as he had spoken about the continuous process of practice in class before.

> Yeah, that’s the interesting thing. See, […], **it depends on […] how we take up the subject.** So most of the students or most of the participants those who come, they have their own [….] approach, or own understanding of, or own, what you call, own likings. **They want to come only to reduce their stomach or waist line. That’s one group. The second group is in need for therapy, medical (help)**.. they have knee problem, back problem, blood pressure, diabetes, so medical problems. **So Very Rarely we see students who will come to Learn, yoga as a subject. So where yoga has to reunite their own self. But that is one, one behavior. They don’t come for that**. So as the goal, the aim, is only that much (fitness or health), that is enough for them. **So we don’t get proper students or proper practitioners**.
>
> As you asked how the body, then mind and then it reaches the soul, so it is not just the physical body. Ok, if you think about that, even the physical body.. **even to Move your hand and leg the brain should work.. [laughter] and unless there is a message you can’t do nothing. So […] basically it is always interlinked.** And **yoga, as per *yoga sūtras*, it is just to know the consciousness, so (to) know our intelligence, our ego**. **It is not just mind actually: mind, intelligence, ego consciousness.** So w**hen all these three (aspects of) consciousness (come together), then you are going to understand yourself. That is the idea of practicing yoga.** So **we don’t know what is soul**, or super soul or supreme soul. That’s why I mentioned that way. So what is, what made it yoga . So thousands of definitions. So, this soul meeting, this supreme soul. No, **you can’t even imagine that, so we don't. We don’t know. What we know is the legs, what we know is the hand,**

[19] All citations are are in their original Indian English, which is their official language and should not be evaluated against the standards of for example British of American English. Indian English has adapted to the local speech communities and, especially in its spoken form and depending on the educational level of the speaker, has in many ways similarities to the local languages for example in regards of syntax and includes some old British words from the colonial times, which may now sound bit odd. I am grateful to Mikko Viitamäki for verifying my interpretation on the language variation. However, I will abbreaviate some colloquial repetitions marked in square bracket as […] but for better readability add some words inside parentheses. First letter capitals are used to mark the emphasis on words. To highlight most important points I use bolding to avoid too much repetition in my analysis.

> **(connected to) the cord […]. from the brain. So that we have to study, with that consciousness.**
>
> If you are understand even the basic structure of what we practice, that's so interesting.. so why.. what happen when you do a forward bend.. […].. though it is a physical action what happens, what happen to the physiological functions like breathing for example.. in a backward bend. […] what type of awareness we get.. what type of lightness you feel after we do a forward bend. After doing a backward bend certain time, what happens to your […] chest part, the emotional part. […] .. most do it just for a physical exercise. But nothing happens to them, only in certain poses, Why you feel like crying. It's not cry, it's not sadness, there's no sadness there. So you can't explain that. So you can't explain that side, that crying. So something comes up, the emotions come up. So then we can think about, it balances the emotions. But it depends, that's why, how we take it. Ok, **we take yoga just as a physical exercise, physical fitness, health problems, that's why. Very rarely we see all those people learn. Slowly,** yeah, definitely. **Though even myself I started yoga just because to cure my asthma. I was asthmatic patient, wheezing. So for that I started, now slowly I know what to do**. Though I was a professional in accountant, I gave up and took this, to meet people.. […] **what I experience(d) I like to give it to you**
>
> **[… … …]**
>
> (T)hat's the interesting (thing) for me, because **Slowly I have to build up, as a teacher. That's why I call.. in certain time we loose the quality of teaching, so we become like a tailor, like.. that's why I say, like a customer care.** So people, what you want, oh to reduce stomach, ok, come. So those with headache, come. So what we want, we can't teach. Because there's no.. a person to learn in that sense, or what I know. **So that's why I keep a talk sometime.. or an intensive or or.. there are two classes: orientation classes, where we go lot of repetition, lot of explanation.. about yoga and about what we do, and then slowly build up**. So now, now we have a strong group like 30, 40 they are coming from 15 to 25 years. So that we have a little group now. But still I am not comfortable, not happy in that way, because they have their own limitations of.. […]. Even commitment, they can't commit themselves. Time. So, another 15 minutes enough, after 5 minutes, you can't stay another 5 minutes more. Where these practices request 2-2,5 hours.

First of all he places the responsibility of the practice on the students, as was mentioned earlier in the chapter on *guru*. To move forward on spiritual path is the task on the student and not on the *guru (*Mlecko 1982, 38), although he much later on, like many other teacher on various accounts, emphasizes the teachers' role to inspire and ignite interest. Secondly, he identifies three different motivations for why people come to yoga: fitness (weight loss), health issues and, lastly, yoga proper. According to him, most people don't come to learn yoga. In terms of the categories that Lambek (1993) uses, the *guru* thus places most yoga students under the category of 'people on the path'. To repeat what has been said in this work, Lambek (1993, 69-70, 103) describes

the investment of 'people on the path' in a discipline as a "passive consumer" attitude toward knowledge: "Their interest in knowledge is practical and immediate: gaining the correct knowledge to get a specific job done. The person on the path does not want to control the means of production of knowledge, but merely to make use of its fruits." Thus, yoga becomes a product that can be consumed, and as teachers need to adapt their teachings to these predominant motivations, they become agents of customer service, which is quite contrary to the assumed role of a respectable *guru* passing on revered knowledge. Although later he does give credit to the committed, long-time students he does have, for which he clearly is also grateful for, he notes that, for example, time-wise even these people are not able commit to the extent the more advanced practices would require.

The guru then elaborates on the mind-body connection typical to Indian thinking. In contrast to Western thought, in Indian thinking there is no inherent dualism between the mind and body. Rather, in Indian thought, disconnection between mind and body is seen as a practical dysfunction. Therefore, practices exist to achieve unity and integration between mind and body, for example, by body training the mind or mind training the body (see Kasulis 1993, xviii). Statements on the interconnection of body and mind repeatedly came up during my fieldwork, when I was trying to understand how body and mind are connected in practice. As Staal notes (1993, 69) the Indian concept of *manas*, conventionally translated as "mind", should not be expected to be the same as "mind" of Western dualism. Observing different bodily activities Staal (1993, 88-95) concludes that they are not "physical" in the Western sense, and as an expression psycho-physical is an unnecessary one as they were never separated to begin with. As Koller (1993, 45-47) explains, in Indian philosophical traditions "the human body is viewed as a living process that integrates a complex variety of mental and physical processes (Koller (1993, 4)", that is body is actually body-mind, which includes also the causal, karmic processes. Additionally it is seen as an instrument of the trancendental Self, independent of its embodied condition. The dominant traditional view is that the Self is held hostage by the body-mind, and therefore the strategies and techniques for its liberation are emphasized. Furthermore, although the "path to liberation is followed by the embodied self, full knowledge of body-mind is seen as a necessary condition for its liberation of the pure self from its bondage. (Koller, 1993, 47)".

This background helps to elucidate the *guru's* reference to the neural connection of mind actually moving the body, by sending the message from the brain.

Here, he works to explain an Indian conception of body-mind connection in a manner a Westener can understand it. He then explains what is ”mind” in yoga, and simultaneously what is yoga. This is done by referring to the objectified knowledge of Patañjali's *yogasūtras*, thus, presenting the authorative knowledge from yoga's textual canon. I cannot emphasize enough how deeply embedded this communicative strategy is in Indian discussing yoga, and of course it stems from the authority of sanskritic scriptures (see Parry 1985).

He then goes on to explain yogic conceptions of consciousness (*citta)*, which is a very central concept in Patañjali's yoga and appears as early on as in the second *sūtra*[20], emphasizing its importance. He explains that actually mind is not just mind, but there is mind *(manas)*, intelligence (*buddhi)* and ego consciousness (*ahamkara)*, which together form the individual consciousness (*citta)*. Understanding their integration, and aiming for the self-realization is the core idea of yoga, the *guru* explains: to understand oneself and to unite with the supreme soul. In short he instantly takes me to the core teaching of yoga, which is carefully explained as a process in the *yoga sūtras*. Instead of going into the details of the sublime process, he then emphasizes that we don't know this soul. It is too abstract, instead what we can know is the concrete, that is, body parts like legs and arms. Therefore, the yoga practice begins by consciously studying the body, utilizing the intelligence and mind.

Later in the same interview he even says that to understand one's own leg can takes years. Yoga practice is thus about spreading the intelligence, *citta prasadana*: ”when you practice *āsana*.. that.. spreading takes place.. So, intelligence.. mind and intelligence will move everywhere, from toes to your fingers. […] So, when you penetrate properly, then all these sheaths, you can.. touch it. You can feel it. It's all interconnection.” Of course, it should be added, this line of thinking is central to the discipline of Iyengar Yoga, which he teaches and practices. The attention to details of the body techniques is designed to facilitate this 'awareness' in yogic terms, or proprioception (see also Ciołkosz 2017) in scientific terms.

The *guru* proceeds to discuss embodied knowledge as understanding the effects of the practice, how physical action has for example physiological, mental and emotional effects. He mentions as an example that in certain poses emotions one is unaware of is released: practice has the potential to balance emotions. Many teachers

[20] This famous *sūtra "yogaḥ cittavṛtti nirodhaḥ"* explains yoga as the ”cessation of fluctuations of consciousness” (see for example Iyengar 2005; Iyengar has translated it as 'movements of consciousness, however, fluctuations is also possible and a more commonly used). If one knows only one *sūtra,* is is probably this one

explained to me that yoga practice works on you, even if you do not understand how it happens and as such a lot of knowledge can be gained by experience, by continuous practice. Nevertheless, the *guru* then returns to the responsibility or attitude towards learning: to some extent yoga does work on you, despite your inclination, however, if one practices yoga strictly in constricted terms, that is what one is likely to receive also. He then reveals that he also started practicing due to health problems, but he points to the potential of transforming from ’person on the path’ status into a ’well-informed citizen’, or even an ’expert’ of which he is a living example.

Basically, then, his narration depicts yoga as a process: as the ultimate goal of self-realization is too abstract both in objectified and embodied notions, one has to start with something that is attainable, to learn one’s own physical body. Starting with building the embodied knowledge is not a problem, it is the starting the point, whereas taking the first steps of the process as the whole process, is the problem. However, he noted in other part of the interview that in some other styles the practice may begin differently. His conviction of the need to begin with the concrete body, thus, stemmed from his own experiences.

Later, towards the end of the interview he completed my sentence that ”yoga practice is…” by saying, ”Limited, although it is Unlimited thing! Open sesame!” For him yoga is like space, ”what we have inside is a space”, and he would like to open gates to that ”space” for his students. The metaphor of space as unlimited is obvious, also in the sense of referring to the microcosmos of human body of the macrocosmos of the universe, and it should be also noted that the space, *ākaśa*, known also as aether, is one of the five basic elements that the nature, *prakṛti*, consists of in the *saṃkhya-yoga* cosmology. As another side note, many of the yoga *asānas* also serve to increase the space in the sense that they create more room: one can observe and rest in their sensations and creating more space releases tension, potentiating freedom which can be felt both in the body and the mind (see also Bar 2013). However, instead of opening up to the potentials of space exploration, most people are interested in more mundane things.

As a true expert, his genuine wish would be to teach, to share and to perform to the full potential of his knowledge and competence. However, like any good performer and teacher he acknowledges that the audience wants less, and as such can only receive less, and as a teacher he conforms to it. His strategy is to transmit, impart knowledge slowly and provide special events like talks on yoga to build up. To avoid any

misunderstanding, which could impart an negative image of yoga teachers or students of yoga in general, it must be highlighted how much he enjoys working with people and how attentive, caring and empathetic this *guru* was (and surely still is) towards his students, always trying to reach the students and leveling with them as he in the following section narrates.

> **I like to meet to, to Reach You, that's the enriching part**, so.. As I said, **there are thousands of people suffering from many things. So why they come here, is just to move my hands and legs, no. We have.. it.. to start with**! […] I Talk to people.. seeing their nature. So if there is old lady, I may talk in (a) different style, (using) different approach in different subject. One or two, that's it. I go on, I don't.. go on talking in all.. so Each one I.. is small one [child], I come down to that level and talk, speak to her. **So that's the way I'm reaching people, so (by) what you call friendliness and compassion**. […] (When) as a teacher or as a practitioner, I can make out this person is having a little problem, like a psychological problem, or mental problem at least That Day. So, I may go to them and ask are you not feeling well, are you really ok, how is your health, *it doesn't look that you are ok [silght laughter]*. Then I give a sequence. **That should, that should be one of the quality for a teacher, to Approach, to Help his student.**

It must be added that as yoga therapy was quite prominent in both disciplines, many teachers studied also other disciplines like anatomy and physiology in addition to the deep understanding of the effect of yoga practice, and yoga philosophy. Thus, there also the interconnection of objectified and embodied was regarded valuable. As already mentioned the *guru* had had health problems himself and that brought him to yoga, and because he benefited from the practice he wanted to share what he learned. This was a narrative I heard dozens of times teachers giving their story why they became teachers. When one has suffered and got help, it increases the willingness to help. However, in his choice words, there is also a deeper meaning: friendliness and compassion are qualities a *yogi* should cultivate in oneself in order to clear mind from disturbances. It is also part of the spiritual path that one, for example, is able remain calm and strive for one's own serenity by not getting caught by negative emotions. *Sūtra* 1.33, as freely translated by B.K.S. Iyengar (2005, 81), thus asks one "to rejoice with the happy, to be compassionate to the sorrowful, friendly to the virtuous, and indifferent to those who continue to live in vice despite attempts to change them". Yoga practitioners, 'experts' and 'well-informed citizens' strive to live according to the yogic teachings, and the objectified knowledge becomes also their worldview and 'ethical know-how' (cf. Lambek 1997). Yoga practice does not only happen during the one or two hours of *āsana* practice; it should be lived.

> So **one has to study the subject**. So it is not just physical part of yoga, **though we claim that it is 99 % asana, 1 % theory [slight laugh]. No. It has to go hand by hand.** So have to understand.. not just (the) physical aspect, so (we) have to have compassion for beginners, indifference. […], analytical thinking.. should happen. **Even in day to day life.** Not just two hours here and third levelling nonsense. Like people..once in a week they go to church and.. so same thing happens. So it's Life! Mm, **it takes time. Years and years.. to chance our own.. being in that sense. You're right, you have to study a lot. Study a lot in sense to adopt yourself to that, the theory.**

When I ask about his journey and how he started his yoga practice, he explains that he started more than 30 years ago as a 20 years old, and for the first two years he was practicing very rigorously, 108 *surya namaskāra,* sun salutations, every day, and then *prānāyāma*, breathing exercises, and meditation. He also did chanting and many other things and had various experiences, and he then told that now he can understand what he was doing, and what was happening to him earlier. With experience his practice has changed, and he now has knowledge and can make expert decisions. His teaching has changed too as he admits to being stronger in his words and talking more about *kundalini* and other things when he was younger. Now he says yoga is a practical thing. As has been said, opinions of an expert are based upon warranted assertions (Lambek 1993, 69 ref. Schutz 1964, 122). How about the regular students, how do they evolve in building up their knowledge in addition to taking yoga classes? It turned out that the answer was quite simple: by reading books! Few students explained that when they experienced difficulties in life, they started exploring yoga more in depth by attending yoga courses in addition to the regular classes, listening to yoga talks and lectures, and by reading, which had been the suggestion made to me as well.

In short, the narration of a *guru* on yoga emphasized yoga as a process that takes time: it is advisable to start with the body, building up slowly the understanding of the embodied knowledge more thoroughly, and ideally to also study the theory of yoga, the philosophy, as it informs the embodied practice: the concepts of yoga philosophy explains and give a purpose to the embodied practice. Moreover, yoga has many potentials, and it should be studied. Ideally yoga transforms into a lived, everyday practice, as the *guru* nicely explicated. Many other teachers repeated same arguments, yoga takes time and one has to start it from somewhere. I was told that, everyone is a beginner in the beginning, and there are only few exceptional individuals like Sri Ramakrishna (see De Michelis 2004) who fell in *samādhi* involuntarily. That is the process of yoga.

5.1.3 ’All yoga is yoga’ vs. narratives of assuming authority

This section will continue on the previous description of yoga as a process. The plurality of yoga traditions has been discussed earlier in this work. And, in the field, I was quite interested in the differences among contemporary yoga disciplines, especially since sometimes I was told that my use of ‘yoga’ referred only to *Hatha Yoga*. In Bangalore, I also encountered people who similarly showed interest in what others were doing yoga-wise, if sometimes their evaluation of disciplinary differences were based on rather shallow statements about “authenticity.” Again, I should emphasize: I have no interest in building an argument about ’authenticity’; I am simply presenting yoga as it was practiced during my fieldwork.

Some of the most critical evaluations of yoga disciplines included following statements:

> ”Create awareness, without awareness it is not yoga”,
>
> ”Sometimes yoga is taught without addressing mind, without mental practice: *physical teaching is only fitness*… many teachers are teaching yoga as it were acrobatics. Yogic exercises must be treating both body and mind: both interact intensively”
>
> ”People are inflicted by ignorance, they think yoga is only fitness and health. But they will learn the ”truth” through the practice if they continue practicing.
>
> ” Yoga should not be heavy, but light and pleasant, if it is heavy it is not yoga”.
>
> ”Many think yoga can be achieved quickly. Yoga cannot be achieved quickly.”
>
> ”*Āsanas* should be able to be done classically, without any modifications.” vs. ”Other styles don’t have this freedom of modification.”
>
> ”What is yoga? It has been taken as a small proportion like headstand and say that it is yoga: so many are teaching yoga without any relation to the philosophy”

In one lecture in particular a clear guideline and context for evaluating yoga is given:

> **Yoga makes us fully a person: physically, morally, spiritually. Most actresses practice yoga only for physical maintenance**: attractive, fascinating, able to draw the attention of the public, but they rarely have character. Physics is not everything. Although physical wellbeing is good – diet, exercise etc.– it is not all. Vivekananda was mistaken for prince because of his appearance, as highly attractive. He drew more attention than smart, well-dressed people. How was he different? In the West you require tailor, barber, washerman etc. to make a gentleman, in India we require only character to make gentleman: moral soundness of a character. For example, Mahatma Gandhi was physically weak person, but attracted everybody by moral. **Without moral soundness yoga is useless.** If one is concentrating only on the physical, we are doing injustice to

> the other two [moral and spiritual]. Yoga is discipline to make our lives pleasant, sweet. Everything should have its place, and there should be no anxiety. Compartmentalize the mind! Have a time for everything: causation, procedure. …YOGA addresses body, mind, intellectual: it is possible with discipline. Vivekananda did not want to give yoga to all people, who do not have discipline. Poor man gets 100 rupees drinks it all. Wise man gets 100 rupees and buys Bhagavad Gita, reads it and makes use of it. It is a matter of spiritual sublimity. **Yoga is to shrine only in the frame of discipline.** (Field note books, emphasis are mine)

Additionally, there were many comments on spirituality getting lost as yoga classes became more commercialized. It is interesting to note that, in 2005, similar arguments circulated within Helsinki's the yoga community and on online forums.

Nevertheless, when I asked explicitly about differences between yoga practices, or made evaluations of my own, I was soon corrected with the statement "yoga is yoga" , "all yoga is yoga", or "all yoga is the same". There are few things that comes to mind as an explanation for this paradox. The *guru* gives a clue.

> Yoga is one – (it is) no different according to the names. Each teacher is different, so though the teaching is the same, yoga is the same, there are thousands of teachers, thousands of practices, thousands of ways to reach people nowadays. So not to reach ourselves, so to reach people. That's why we have many styles, so they want to propagate their own style, so.. though we belong to same teacher, like for example I belong to [name erased]. There are many thousands and thousands of teachers, they will have gone to *guruji* of same style, same *trikonāsana*, same *āsana*, but the concept are.. it depends on the individual who takes (it) up. It will occur to his mental capacity. He will take (the teaching). Then he goes on expanding or as guruji says diluting. So these things will happen how.
>
> [……] As I think, as I'm watching people around.. So we all belong to same category, we all are practioners in a level, in a level. So we think though something will happen, this is my own thought. Then if you see someone he also teaching the same thing, same action. What does it mean? So if we Practise in that sense, everything will come, what you call.. Uniform. There is uniformity. So I taught some, this action, this movement, some movements, I thought I got it. So recently when I went to [farway place], I saw one book which is many years ago, which is published, is in the magazine that is from [a yoga institute]. But I never learned from them! I never learned from them! […].

First of all, quite central to Indian (spiritual) epistemologies is the understanding of a principle and its various manifestations. For example, the Hindu pantheon can be said to in fact consist of one god and its numerous manifestations (see Fuller 1992, 30; Narayanam 2000), so in Hinduism there is a concept of 'eternal principle' that takes distinct manifestations. On the other hand, Hinduism has incorporated a vast plurality of traditions, and I see plurality of yoga traditions within this wider plurality.

> Most Hindu traditions revere a body of sacred literature, the Veda, as revelation, though some do not; some traditions regard certain rituals as essential to for salvation, others do not; some Hindu philosophies postulate atheistic reality who creates, maintains and destroys universe, others reject this claim. … Hinduism does not have a single historical founder, as do so many other world religions; it does not have a unified system of belief encoded in a creed or declaration of faith; it does not have a centralized authority and bureaucratic structure. (Flood 1996, 6).

Additionally, people are themselves on different stages in their path on yoga, which as a reality is not under evaluation. However, it will have a significant effect on how they receive, understand and, thus, represent the teachings to the next generation. Although imitation is key in the learning process, especially as people gain competence or confidence they become more independent performers and make the teaching of their own: instead of just repeating the words and teachings of their teachers, they might add new elements or they might alter the content. Personal qualities can result in accepted innovations or performances regarded by competent experts as not doing justice to the knowledge discipline.

Now, although there is a sense of critical evaluation here, even more so I now regard the above mentioned, shorter comments as narratives assuming authority: ” I have knowledge, therefore, I am competent to evaluate”. Especially when we discuss embodied disciplines, the sense of having experience, the felt sensations give validity to one’s own together with the objectified knowledge, obviously. However, the competence to perform does not automatically give legitimacy to evaluate others. Especially the ’man on the street’ and ’person of the path’ often reverting to pragmatic solutions might be blind to the degrees of knowledge and other subtle hierarchies. This becomes apparent, as I, a novice, make comments or ask questions that could be regarded as perhaps critical. Essentially, being critical of others is not considered to accord to the values of yoga. Yoga philosophy teaches to strive for exceeding dualisms, and to cultivate indifference to them. Lastly, the *guru* observes that, as practitioners of yoga, all are in the same group. He shares from his own experience a story where he has realized something in his practice, later to come across in a completely another place that someone had made the same realization. The practice has the potential to lead individuals on different path to the same goal, to attain same knowledge.

Due to the larger framework on Indian concepts like that of ’universal principle’, it could be said then that in the larger, meta-level all yoga is same: people are on the path of transforming oneself, no matter how it manifests. However, when people do evaluate the performance of others what they actually do is assume a role of authority,

competence for evaluation and perform their own knowledge.

5.1.4 Narrative of decontextualization: participation framework challenged

I once had a chance to participate in an event where yoga teachers were discussing issues that they were facing professionally. One particularly interesting question that came up was students behaving more like customers than students, being critical towards their teachers and not only demanding results but also wanting to know beforehand how fast they would get the results. Those who had faced these questions seemed perplexed, and some of them seemed somewhat startled how to handle these kind of yoga students. It was clearly something they were not prepared to face as yoga teachers. However, the leader of the discussion had experience in the matter and a clear view on it. He explained that this kind of attitude comes from the realm of gyms and their alluring marketing that promise fast results, for example a drastic change in three months and a money back guarantee. When people are exposed to these kinds of advertisements a lot, they bring it to the yoga classes as well. His advice to the teachers was simple: to be patient and to try to explain to these students that yoga does not work quite that way that we can promise a time line for the results to be attained. Yoga surely ”does work” but one should just do the practice and see what follows.

The contradiction is at least two-sided. The manager’s point of view is the key: students who see themselves as customers buying a product they can consume expect the results they want in a certain time. It is very different from the notion of a learning process and the framework of more traditional teacher-student relationship in yoga, the *guru-sisya parampara*, in which the teachers themselves have been socialized into, at least as an ideal framework. They most likely were quite devoted to their own teachers, or at least respected them a lot. Even if the teachers would not see themselves as *gurus,* I detected in the perplexity of the teachers an underlying expectation for a beginner student to see their participation role (see Hanks 1996) in the context of yoga tradition. This traditional model was asymmetric: the teacher has the expert knowledge and the student does not. Thus, ideally, a good student would be humble and would be respectful to the teacher. However, the students who adhered to the asymmetry structure of customer service put themselves on top, as customers to be served.

On couple of other occasions, my interlocutors addressed the same theme. One expert of yoga therapeutics admitted that her students do not understand how yoga actually can help them but instead have expectations similar to going to see their doctor,

and send emails asking for results. She also stated that middle class student were more accepting of the process of yoga while upper class, rich people more often demand answers and results. She also mentioned that when there are problems allopathic medicine practitioner might be sued but they have insurance to cover it. She recommended to be affectionate and share one's knowledge, quote one's own experiences including the cases that did not improve. It must be emphasized that she was showing nothing but compassion and understanding and was encouraging other to do the same.

On the other hand, beyond consumerist students, my informants had a bigger concern about people traveling to India to take a short yoga course, hoping to become teachers in their home countries without any real knowledge. They were understandably devastated about the idea that a novice would assume an expert position. It must be added, though, as alarming as this phenomena is, it is very real globally and seems to exponentially grow also in India. Teacher training is the market and attracts also less experience teachers to become trainers. If we apply the idea of discipline as a parallel, should it take place then anthropology for example could be taught by people who have taken their firs introductory course and assume a position of as a University lecturer. At the same time, in general there has always been both charlatans and people who grow into the roles they jump into too soon.

5.1.5 Narratives of discontinuities

Earlier, I discussed history and tradition as frames of the present. Yoga scholars and practitioners alike have been interested in asserting and evaluating claims to continuities and discontinuities across yoga practices. In this next section, I will present what the Indian yoga practitioners perceive as discontinuities.

Just as the previous section ended with teacher training, I begin my examination of narratives of discontinuities on the same topic: certification courses had already started to be popular in India in 2005 but not everyone valued them. Instead, many valued the traditional *guru-śisya* relationship instead.

> Here in India we never had.. we don't have any teacher certification course.. and.. I know guruji and guruji knows me, so that's the way. And then.. these, all these now teachers who are.. so, like [two teachers mentioned by name].. All.. all my students, so like that they came to know guruji (through me). Now, that's the way. In fact, [same teachers mentioned by name], and some other, they have a certificate. Even I had a certificate. Unfortunately I don't know where I kept it, it's lost. I don't even ask now guruji, please, give me a certificate. Guruji knows

> me well, what I teach, what I am, what I'm doing, so that sense. That's the way. As you said, it's from the beginning of our century. So there's a teacher–student relationship. […]
>
> Yeah, here, as you said, like any other.. industry we can't make it. So that' why **I'm against that culture called teacher's training.. thing.** It's not like any software companies, put 10-15 together and go on giving lectures and make a teacher. **It can't happen in yoga. S**o it's just like emotions, sentiment, everything is caught up, everything is here.

The *guru* refers by sentiment to the personal on-to-one relationship. Another aspect closely related to it, that teaching has become a profession

> It has become a profession now. So that's the main thing now. Like if you go to temple area or a church or so, they are all Professionals! They are not linked to.. they are not.. or have that devotion or.. that type. It's a profession for them, they know how to do it, the rituals. They do and go on [laughter].. and after they come and watch tv. They may smoke, they may play cards. It's, it's like a profession. So like that, even yoga teachers certain time may become Very professional. We may not even have time to practice. So.. take class here, go here and run everywhere and give class. Come to television and give a class, go to radio in town. So we have one center here, another center there, go on. If you can't teach then call someone, organize classes [laughter] **So, that, that have become a profession and then you loose that quality of practice, quality of teaching. So when you teach a long, like this, you may not be having strength to practice also. Then slowly start practicing only relaxation [slight laughter]. That's it. So, then we don't have quality of practice. Then even the quality of teaching also (is lost).**.

As mentioned before, many people commented that teaching for money, that is, commercialization, ruins spirituality. Of course living solely as yoga teacher can be difficult financially, and surely people are forced to do many things in order to survive. However, the *guru* sees a vicious circle following from becoming too busy: one does not have time nor energy to keep up a vibrant practice, which will after some time affect the teaching. Obviously such thoughts warn against a reductionist approach to yoga. He, as a long time expert, acknowledges also another kind of discontinuity one cannot avoid: aging.

> Even, even.. for like ten years practitioner, after some time the stagnation period comes there. Because of the aging. So after 40 years, everywhere starts paining. You may not be able to sit in *virāsana*, knee pains. You can't bend backwards because eyes become suppressed or back pain. But even with that holding teeth you might have seen the teacher, holding the teeth he'll think that he's holding. So why isn't it necessary? Can't do, limit.. For Me is opening, not to hold, it's stretching in that sense. Not to harden your thoughts, either harden your body in that sense. So it's just open. So that's why, then the stagnation comes in your practice. So then pain, then rejection, why can't, able to do, I'm not able to Show my students, that these things will happen. So we may develop high blood

> pressure with all this [laughter] practices, we may develop high blood pressure. I ended up with back pain because of wrong practice, you go on practicing that, like bad pose in *trikonasana* you will definitely develop a knee pain or back pain. We don't know how to correct yourself. When the teacher doesn't know how to correct himself, so how can he guide a student. So then he can't show the student wrong, so what to teach! Then go on, searching for new ones.. like taking something from here. There's a thing happening, massage, give an anatomy class, give chanting, that thing happens.

He expounds how over time stagnation is bound to come, especially as with aging, because variety of problems start to arise. He is then explaining that people give up and choose something else, instead of committing. At the same time society at large is changing

> Everything is changing. We also are like Any Other Western Human Being. You see, the culture was happening.. what was the difference between Indian and other.. especially in Bangalore and other, no. They don't know this. What the character of Ramasita, Lakshmi, Baba.. Ramayana, Mahabharata.. they don't know.. forget about Bhagavad Gīta. They don't even know how to pray. The Everything we are loosing. So we are taking.. certain, most parts from the.. United States.. to forget about life.. easy way.. all in that sense.. Not the discipline.

Despite the amount of respect for traditional Indian values and customs, on many occasions people commented how Indians follow the Americans, many do yoga because USA sets the example. A close informant of mine also stated that Indians do not respect their heritage. Of course India has also been affected by its version of modernization and secularization. Yoga has been medicalized, institutionalized, and sold as it has become a tourist attraction.

> They used to.. even now they say that.. oh, whatever we teach in cities are very commercial, so they don't.. know the real knowledge of yoga, how to teach. So it should be.. individual to individual. So that's why they say, they are there in the Himalaya. They are there! [laughter] Some yogis who is just capturing people, they give one mantra and one word and they think they are yogis in that sense.. They are selling in that sense. Even that has been.. marketed. And then they put in their website so-and-so swamiji who is.. who is held in Samadhi, see, he gave us the darshan, he gave us *the knowledge [laughter]*.. that he has, simple movement, āsan, and chanting. I saw one.. a person like.. with small beard, with Big stomach, opening eyes, sitting like this, someone has taken photo, 'swamiji in *samādhi' [both laugh].. what is Samādhi? Opening eyes is Samādhi..* So all this are there. So they say, oh, we've been to India, so we have been to Rishikesh, so from swamiji. We have been to Pune, some swamiji. We've gone to Lonavla, certificate course. Went somewhere.. so everywhere, they can show, because they have a digital camera, they click it, capture everything and they say we have, we have been to India, as an experience, Fantastic experience.

Likewise "yoga" has become excessively commodified.

> Everywhere in.. like, sticky mats, selling mats, everything. The clothes are sold as yogic dress, yogic tea.. *everything yoga [slight laughter]*. Even the toilets are named yogini and *yogis.. [both laugh*] The toilets.. the buddhas and gods are kept on the toilets, and you should rush water, whatever you call it, tank.. I see.. putting incense sticks everywhere, and keeping our Radha, Krsna and god on the wall, where they jump and keep the feet into the God's face. And using some little *mantras*, yoga *sūtra* and giving, and go on repetition, and that become meditation lessons. They say it calms you down. I saw All the things like that, in the name of yoga.

Although he is joking about the yoga accessories and ornaments, and the branding of name of yoga, within the joke there is also quite a serious criticism of cultural appropriation. Taking the purity conceptions into consideration, it is disrespectful to place objects of worship in the toilet or a symbol of a god on a yoga mat that you step on as feet are considered the most impurest part of the body. He also ricidules the light-weight mediation lessons. Remember how in the beginning of the interview he mentioned that the practice can either expand or dilute? In the case of Americas, what he has witnessed, the tradition has been in many cases diluted.

5.1.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the multiple and overlapping narratives on yoga that I encountered during my field research in Bangalore. The picture produced by these narratives should interest scholars of yoga. In contrast to some scholars and practitioners, my informants were not so concerned by deliberations on the "autheniticity" of various yoga disciplines nor were they focused on typologizing different eras or traditions of yoga practice. Rather, my informants chiefly expressed a holistic view on yoga in their narratives, that, for instance, yoga is a process and that "all yoga is yoga." As I have argued here, one can see how these views reflect and expand on Hinduism and yoga philosophy that pertains to, for instance, a central priniciple and its diverse manifestations or how consciousness links to body and mind. Thus, although several of my informants produced critical narratives on the commericalization and internationalization of yoga, these worries were enveloped in the more fundamental and holistic yoga narratives. As the title of this work echoes: all yoga is yoga. As I hope to have shown, by understanding the philosophy of this conviction, one gains perspective on the social reality of contemporary yoga and how practitioners navigate and narrate its tensions and meanings.

6 Conclusions

This work stemmed from the various debates of the definition, authenticity and plurality of yoga traditions both among practitioners and scholars. The aim of the work had two aspects: to move away from these debates by constructing a new theoretical perspective, and to study yoga as a lived, non-ascetic practice in India. Because yoga has not been studied among the Indian yoga students in India, this thesis attempts at mapping the social reality of yoga as it existed in mid 2000's among the of middle-aged, middle-class Hindu practitioners. In this work I analyze how they narrate yoga. Overview of yoga history is presented as frame that both provides an intertextual library and guides interpretation as authoritative voice of "past in the present". Similarly, in India the Sanskritic textual canon and the institution of *guru* have served as the traditional sources of authoritative knowledge of, nothing less than, truth. Their pre-eminence was evident in the field and my informants were quick to cite the authoritative sources in all kinds of discussions.

The yoga narratives I encountered in Bangalore essentially then affected how I, after my field work, shifted my focus from tradition to knowledge. The dialogic relationship of theory and practice was from the beginning at the core of my work, and knowledge as an analytic category proved to be a useful tool for navigation through many of the paradoxes I observed in the field. Exploring yoga knowledge as two interconnected categories of objectified knowledge, that is theory and philosophy of yoga, and embodied knowledge, by which I refer not only to the practiced techniques of yoga but essentially all knowledge that is performed. Therefore, I observe yoga classes and narratives as knowledge performances. I suggest that this line of analysis has many potentials for further elaborations, for example performance potentiates processes of decontextualization, entextualization and recontextualization.

Lastly, I analyze some practitioner narratives by using the concepts of objectified and embodied knowledge, hierarchies of knowledge and participant roles in addition to exploring the narratives in their ethnographic context, and as a result I am able to conclude: the performances potentiate integration of objectified and embodied knowledge, and despite all the differences, "all yoga is yoga!"

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